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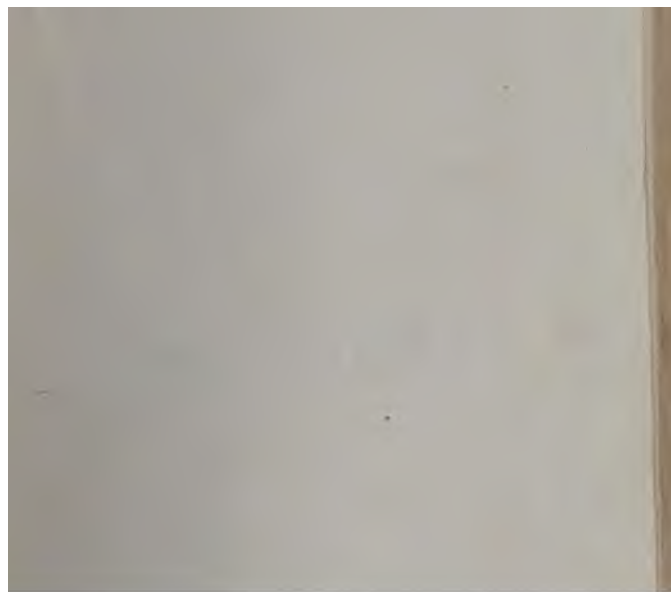


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HELEN FLEETWOOD.



# HELEN FLEETWOOD,

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

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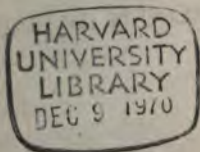
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# HELEN FLEETWOOD

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

WHO that has seen the sun's uprising, when his first bright gleam comes sparkling over the billows on a clear autumnal morning, but has felt a thrill of gladness at his heart—an involuntary, perhaps an unconscious ascription of praise to the Creator, who has so framed him that all his innate perverseness cannot bar the entrance of that thrill? The brisk wind that curls the wave, and flings its light spray abroad, does but multiply mirrors for the imaged ray to flash from; and when the mighty orb has wholly lifted his disk above the swelling outline of the beautifully-rounded horizon, and looks down upon the surmounted barrier, sending beam after beam to traverse that watery world, and to gild it with dazzling splendor, who does not accord the palm of natural magnificence to that of which no adequate idea can be conveyed to one who has not looked upon it—sunrise at sea?

It was on such a morning, in the month of September, when the breeze was strong, the billows tumultuous, and the sun resplendent in a clear blue sky, that Helen Fleetwood paused on the edge of a cliff which overlooked the eastern wave, to indulge, perhaps for the thousandth time, an emotion of delight not the less vivid because *Helen* was a simple country girl, whose thoughts



had never learned to clothe themselves in language worthy of the occasion that called them into existence. Of the milk-pail which swung lightly to and fro upon her arm, she could have discoursed with judgment and propriety: but of that blaze of light, first stealing, then flashing, then broadly spreading in a refulgent mantle, over the surface of the deep, Helen had little to say. She nevertheless felt its joyous influence through every fibre of her frame, and her young heart danced as gaily beneath its light as the most airy bubble upon the billow's crest. In like manner Helen's lips had hitherto been mute, when others spoke of brighter beams, the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, as he rises with healing in his wings upon a benighted world of tumult and strife; but there was that within her bosom which owned his power, and rejoiced in his light.

Tripping by her side as she walked on, and wheeling in a restless circle around her when she paused, little Mary Green bore the three-legged stool that was to aid them in their operation on the two cows, whose distant lowings were occasionally audible during the short pauses of the ocean's measured roar. It was not in Mary's nature to be silent long; and, after gazing up into Helen's face, to read in its happy expression the pleasure that her loving heart never failed to reciprocate, the little girl gave utterance to her companion's thought and her own, by remarking, 'Sunrise is very pretty, Helen.'

'Yes, it is,' replied the other, 'and a pity it would have been to lose the fine sight by letting some sleepy little girls take their own time to get up.'

Mary laughed: 'Why you know the mornings are not so warm now as they were a month ago; and there was hardly light enough to dress by. I am always glad afterwards; but somehow I don't like giving up my own way at the time.'

'Nor I,' said Helen: 'but you know, Mary, one's duty is the best rule to go by; and one never regrets in the *long run* having done so.'

‘Talking of a long run,’ rejoined Mary, whose taste by no means accorded with anything savoring of a lecture, ‘let us race now till we come to the gate, or the cows will be tired of waiting, and get cross; and what will old Buckle say then?’

Helen assented; and with one parting glance over the bright sea, turned towards the shed where the cows were kept; and away they both ran till the intervening stile obliged them to pause ere they crossed it.

The full pail, nicely poised as it was on Helen’s head, required a steadier pace in returning; and the two girls pursued the chat, which indeed rarely knew an interval during the many waking hours they passed together.

‘The people in towns,’ said Helen, ‘would think it a great hardship to be out a-milking at this time of day.’

‘They are better off than we:’ replied Mary, to whom the idea of a long morning nap was by no means unpleasing.

‘Better off in some things, Mary,’ said her companion thoughtfully: ‘but to see the sickly looks of the ladies who come down this way on their road to the bathings, I am not sure I would change with them.’

‘What! not ride in your own coach?’ inquired Mary with a stare of astonishment.

‘I don’t know: I hav’n’t yet had more walking than agreed with me. Somehow too, the morning is so pleasant, and the fresh air does make one feel so hearty and alive, that if I was in a coach I think I’d be tempted to jump out and take a run.’

Mary laughed loudly at the idea of a lady racing against her own coach and horses, but admitted that she should not like to be forced to ride at all times—only when she felt sleepy or lazy. Thus merrily discoursing, the girls approached the gate of what might be called a farm-yard on a small scale; within the limits of which rose a cottage with a very steep pointed roof, well thatched, walls of snowy whiteness, long, narrow casements, and a porch recently added to its entrance; and



HELEN FLEETWOOD.

Fleetwood was but one among five or six whose widows were pacing the beach in wild distraction, or sitting stupefied beneath the blow. Helen could also remember the day when, some time after this, a corpse, decomposed beyond the possibility of recognition, was cast ashore on a sandbank just above low-water mark, and identified by some fragment of wearing apparel as that of her father. She saw him not: but too well did her memory retain the impression of that moment when the widow Green, holding her by the hand, directed her gaze into a coffin, where lay the heart-broken mother and her new-born babe peacefully shrouded together. Of these things the girl never spoke, and it was kindly hoped that they had faded from her naturally cheerful mind: but it was far otherwise.

The widow Green had experienced affliction in another form; of all the children whom she had reared, her son William best repaid the maternal care bestowed on him; and when he married, the first act of his independence as a master of a comfortable cottage, was to place his mother in the choicest of its rooms. His wife, a kind-hearted young woman, heartily concurred in the proceeding, and reaped her reward when the rapid increase of a young family gave full scope to the valuable services of a judicious grandmother. All went well with them; and the readiness with which poor Helen was adopted into the domestic party on the old woman's suggestion, more closely cemented their mutual confidence and love. But, alas! William's third child sickened of small-pox; the eldest caught the infection, then the mother, and all three died. Poor Green struggled hard to bear up, for the sake of those who remained; but a violent cold taken through continual transitions from the close, heated atmosphere of a sick room to the keen night air of February, in his walk across the common to the doctor's shop, fell on his lungs; and consumption soon laid him beside those whom he had dearly loved *and deeply mourned.*



The widow was a woman of vigorous mind, doubly armed in the panoply of faith, and enabled to cast herself, with the children committed to her, on Him whom she had found to be a stronghold in the day of trouble. Her charge consisted of three boys and a girl, the survivors of William's family, and Helen Fleetwood. Richard Green was a year older than Helen; James three years younger; and Mary his junior by nearly two years. The little Willy was but eight at the period when this story commences; and Richard was seventeen. Their father held his cottage, with a field and small garden, on a lease of lives, and bequeathed them to his mother, in trust for Richard, should the lease remain good until he came of age. The landlord indeed, who had granted it on exceedingly favorable terms, promised a renewal; but he died soon after his tenant, and his verbal engagement could not bind the heir at law—a gentleman residing at a distance and leaving everything in the hands of his trusty agent.

Mrs. Green proved herself a wise and faithful steward. The cottage was larger than their diminished household required; and she let two rooms to a respectable woman, the widow of the parish beadle, who paid liberally, according to her means, and proved a quiet, friendly lodger. She let the field by the year, for its just value, which nearly settled the rent of the whole premises; and managed the little garden so well that its produce brought in a small sum, after supplying the family table. A few fowls, Helen's peculiar care, yielded their quota of profit in the neighboring village market; James kept rabbits, which, thriving well on the refuse of the garden, helped to replenish the general purse: the same prolific garden nearly maintained a pair of ducks, presented to little Willy in their infancy, and soon learning to forage for themselves, to the great advantage of lettuces and savoy, which had often borne the marks of sundry nocturnal depredators, against whom the said ducks waged exterminating war. Willy sank a little round tub in the

fowl-yard, and predicted that his ducks would soon prove the most valuable of their possessions.

Richard had profited well by the advantages placed within his reach: he was of a serious, thoughtful turn, but exceedingly active. The school where his father had placed him at seven years old was established for the benefit of boys in an humble walk of life, and the gratuitous teaching was excellent. Richard acquired whatever was to be learned; by his diligence and good conduct earning a reputation that ensured him employment during every spare hour among the neighbors; and his gains, from which he never deducted a halfpenny for his own gratification, added to the produce of his grandmother's unwearied industry and that of Helen, assisted in time by the improving habits of Mary, who was often roused into 'a great fight,' as she called it, against her natural love of ease, placed the family above want, and indeed in possession of every comfort they could reasonably desire.

But alas for the stability of human happiness, so far as it is dependent on perishable things! The last life in the lease was one on which they might fairly have reckoned for many a long year to come. A severe illness, however, seized on the strong frame of the young man, the only survivor of the three named in that document; and although he rallied in some degree, his state was evidently a precarious one. The lodger, too, was summoned to take possession of some little property left to her in another county, and must leave them shortly. James, the second boy, fell into weak health, imposing an additional care and expense on the household, just as he and they anticipated his becoming an important help, through a good situation that was offered, but for which his increasing debility unfitted him. All these things tended to cloud the atmosphere, and made even the giddy Mary observe that they were 'going down in the world.'

Of this, however, no visible token as yet appeared; *and when the two girls, fresh from their early walk, drew*

near the beloved cottage, all was as smiling as their own faces. James had cleaned out his rabbit-hutch, Willy was gazing with admiration at the exploits of his young ducks in their narrow pond, and Richard made the most of a spare half hour in digging up the bed where a crop of peas had yielded their last produce. As Helen and Mary approached, he stuck the spade in the ground, gave his hands a rinsing under the pump, and joined the group, who together entered the cottage door with wholesome appetites for their breakfast.

Breakfast, however, was not the first concern with this assembled family. The girls, throwing off their bonnets, and hastily smoothing back the hair which had become somewhat disordered by the sea-breeze, followed the widow Green into an adjoining room, occupied by the lodger, and the boys brought up the rear. On a little round table lay the Holy Bible, with a small manual of family devotion; and on the appearance of Mrs. Barker, who promptly answered the accustomed signal, and her settlement in an arm chair, all seated themselves: the widow Green selected a portion of scripture, read it with much deliberation, and offered up a devout prayer of thanksgiving for past mercies, with supplication for guidance, and every needful blessing through the day. A short greeting between the young people and their lodger, marked by affectionate respect on their side, and great kindness on hers, concluded the scene: they then hastened back, to enjoy the morning's meal.

'What sort of a walk had you, girls?' inquired Richard. 'I understand Mary was not quite awake when Helen pulled her out at the door.'

'I was rubbing my eyes,' answered Mary, 'but awake for all that. 'Tis only seven now, and two good hours have I been on my feet.'

'And a great blessing it is, my child,' observed the old lady, 'to be up at work while many are lying on the bed of sickness, and not a few on the bed of sloth.'

'I wish old John Buckle would lie in bed,' continued the little girl, 'and not get up to scold as he does.'



‘Fie, Mary,’ said Helen, laying the threepence beside the old lady’s saucer; ‘consider how kind he is at heart:’ and she delivered his message.

‘I don’t mind a few hard words,’ remarked James, ‘if I get a good basin of milk broth along with them.’

‘Hard words break no bones,’ said Richard; ‘and if none of us ever come to get hard blows into the bargain, we may think ourselves well off.’

‘Blows! I should like to see the person who would try to beat *me*!’ exclaimed little Mary, in high disdain.

‘Hush, my dear child,’ responded the widow. ‘Strokes of the rod are sometimes needful for us; and we have a Father in heaven who will apply them when he sees good. You must not speak so hastily,’ she continued, as Mary opened her lips to reply: ‘the wise man tells us that a haughty spirit cometh before a fall. Let us be humble.’

‘You had better mind what granny says,’ added James: ‘none of us will ever be the worse for minding her.’

All eyes were turned, beaming with affection, upon the old woman, while a half-whispered assent escaped from every lip. If ever any person succeeded in attaching all around her to herself and to each other, the widow Green assuredly did so. She knew it, she saw it daily and hourly, and she numbered it among the chiefest of her earthly blessings.

‘Now, granny,’ said Richard, when the short, frugal repast was ended, ‘I’ve a long errand after school, and you need not expect me home till supper. There’s some parish business to do, and I must take a letter from the overseer to Mr.—I forget his name—the new vestry-clerk, and wait for an answer. So don’t be uneasy if I am late.’

A hearty good-bye was exchanged, and away went the lad to his school-work, which was that of a teacher rather than a pupil. We will leave the cottagers to their daily avocations, and take a peep into a higher grade of *society*.

## CHAPTER II.

### PARISH AFFAIRS.

ABOUT a mile distant from the widow's cottage, hard by the school, and not far from the village church, stood that truly national edifice, the workhouse. On the forenoon of this day, eventful to many a poor creature whose sole dependence was on the result of their deliberations, a knot of functionaries assembled in the room set apart for transacting parish affairs, and very earnest were the looks of those engaged in the discussion. The churchwarden, a prudent, intelligent man; the overseer, the doctor, and two of the general committee were present. The clergyman had not yet made his appearance: and while suspending the special business of the day until he should arrive, they fell into the important subject of their respective duties.

'It cannot be doubted,' said the churchwarden, 'that each man has a twofold sphere of action: the one embracing his personal and family concerns, and the other extending so as to take in his relative duties to the community of which he is a member, and to the country of which he is a subject.'

'Very just,' responded one of the gentlemen; 'and another undeniable proposition is, that the greater duty is the more imperative, and on all occasions where they clash, the inferior claim must yield to the superior.'

'And which do you consider the greater?' asked the doctor.

'The one that takes the widest range, of course,' replied the speaker.

‘Yes,’ resumed the churchwarden; ‘and on this principle we must regulate our proceedings in all matters brought before us to-day. Private feeling may plead, personal interest may perhaps back that plea: but we sit here to administer the funds of the parish, whose representatives we are; and our object must be to secure the greatest possible saving in all branches of our expenditure.’

‘Provided,’ remarked the doctor, ‘that in rendering justice to one class of our fellow-parishioners, we inflict no wrong on another, and perhaps the more numerous class.’

‘Meaning the paupers, I presume?’

‘Yes: though with us they do not constitute the majority—far from it, indeed—I conceive their interests are entrusted to us in at least as extensive and important a measure as those of the superior section.’

‘Excuse me, sir,’ said the overseer, ‘I don’t see how that can be. Money, sir, money is surely the most important trust a man can have in his charge. That is, a layman,’ he added, discerning from a window the clergyman’s approach.

‘A little practice in my line, Mr. Miles,’ said the doctor, turning up a shrewd glance at the speaker, who stood near his chair, ‘would convince you that, in most instances, health, limb, and life are of more value to a man than money itself.’

‘The health, limbs, and lives of the parish could not be in better keeping than they are, sir,’ answered the overseer, bowing low to the professional gentleman, whose half smile and shake of the head bespoke what he had sometimes been heard to declare in that room, of the inefficacy of all his drugs, combined with all his skill, to do justice to his charge, where common nutriment was wanting to support the mortal frame. However, the entrance of the clergyman, with the general movement that greeted his arrival, prevented further remark.

‘I am late,’ said Mr. Barlow; ‘but this wide-spread-

ing though trifling epidemic has thrown an accession of duty on my hands, in the visiting way.'

'It is trifling, sir,' eagerly responded the overseer; 'and your testimony to that fact is of value.'

'I merely meant to distinguish it from the formidable fever of last spring,' said the minister: 'nothing is trifling to the poor man whom it disables, while it lasts, from earning his daily bread.'

Two or three corroborative nods from the doctor rendered it advisable to the majority to drop this subject: for though the minority was small, usually consisting of these two individuals alone, they were so provokingly united in appealing to the evidence of their daily personal experience, in confirmation of their no less provoking prejudices against what went by the name of parochial economy, and so quietly determined in pursuing their object, that they gave the board more trouble than even the paupers whose advocates they were. The clients were easily silenced, if not convinced, by certain summary modes of procedure, well understood by their relieving friends: but these gentlemen had a license, arising even less from their offices than from their high character, and of it they frequently availed themselves, to the no small discomfiture of their brethren, and the occasional overthrow of their best schemes.

We are far from saying that in these schemes the framers were actuated by any other than a conscientious, though certainly an erroneous view of their duties. They held in trust the amount of a public, legal contribution, provided for a definite purpose; and this they considered that they must, as good stewards, husband to the uttermost. Had the contemplated outlay been one merely affecting the inanimate creation, this principle might perhaps have been worked out to the farthest stretch of their ingenuity; but when the question resolved itself into this—upon how scanty a quota of necessary sustenance might human life be supported, so as to avert from its object the climax of actual starvation; and to how



minute a fraction might relief be diminished, so as not to lose the semblance of relief to those for whose special use the fund was set apart—then the calculators were necessarily in imminent peril of sacrificing on the shrine of supposed public duty, not only all the finer feelings of humanity, all the brotherly observances that man owes to man, but also the obedience due from every professing follower of Christ to the explicit, unmistakeable command of his divine Master, “Do ye unto all men even as ye would they should do unto you.”

Now, whatever militates against the scriptural law of love, is always found to be a hardening process. That such was the result of a persevering plan to grind the faces of the poor, though not originating in any natural propensity so to do, will be manifested but too plainly in the progress of this narrative. We are to follow a single family through vicissitudes that thousands of English families are perpetually encountering; and in the progress of our tale we will drop that part of the proceeding which had no direct reference to them, and pass on to the moment when, the result of this special meeting having been duly notified for the information of the distant vestry-clerk, preparatory to a board-day, Richard Green was called in, to bear the letter to its destination. The clergyman and doctor, having their hands full, departed as soon as the business was closed; but the rest of the party remained, consisting of the churchwarden, the overseer, and two others; of whom one, a Mr. Stratton, had earned the reputation of being the shrewdest man at foreseeing, and the most skilful at averting, impending burdens from the parish, within the whole district. Indeed the eminence thus conceded to him became doubly injurious; for in his anxiety to act up to the character, he was led into paths of deception and cruelty, from which he would otherwise have shrank.

Richard, having made his bow, stood, cap in hand, *awaiting his orders*. A short whispering dialogue passed

between the overseer and Mr. Stratton ; at the close of which the latter addressed him with much kindness. ' Well, my boy, I hear you are getting on with credit, and likely to make your way respectably in the world ? '

Richard blushed, and bowed.

' The cottage that your father left is nicely kept : I often ride past, and notice the good repair of all about it. Does the widow Green manage still for you ? '

' My grandmother, sir, has taken care of it, and of us too, ever since father died, seven years ago. '

' Indeed ! a worthy old lady. And how many of you may there be ? '

' Myself is the eldest, sir ; and James, and Mary, and Willy ; besides Helen Fleetwood. '

' She is an orphan, I think ? '

' Quite, sir ; and she has no friend in the world to care for her except granny—and us. '

' Humph ! Where was she born ? '

' In this parish, sir ; and has always lived in it all her life, ' answered Richard with a vivacity that showed he thought either Helen or the parish had somewhat to boast of in the circumstance.

' How old are you ? ' asked the overseer.

' Seventeen last July, and Helen is sixteen. '

' And James ? '

' Thirteen : but being very sickly, you see, sir, he doesn't look so much. Mary is as tall as he, though she's but eleven ; and Willy is just eight, if you please, sir, ' said Richard, who seemed highly gratified at being permitted thus to parade the objects dearest to his heart before the mental view of such fine gentlemen.

A pause ensued ; marked by an interchange of wise looks between the attentive auditors of this family chronology. Mr. Stratton then spoke.

' Oh, by the way, Richard, you will be master of that cottage, won't you ? '

' Granny will be mistress of it as long as she lives, and I live, ' replied the boy, coloring deeply with emotion.

‘Very good : I approve your feeling    And the lease is for ever, isn’t it?’

‘No, sir : for three lives.’

‘All stout and hearty, I hope?’

‘Two of them are gone,’ said the boy, ‘and Mr. Hewitt is the third.’

A sagacious nod from the overseer directed Mr. Stratton’s attention to this point, while he repeated, ‘George Hewitt, of Oakfield—you know him.’

‘And the present landlord,’ pursued Stratton, ‘is Mr. Grey, of Ipswich?’

‘Yes, sir : we hope he’ll renew the lease, as the old landlord told father he’d certainly do, if the lives ran out in his time.’

‘Well, Richard, be a good lad ; you’ve a deal of information, I see, and may turn out a great credit to your family. Now take this letter to Mr. Hall, and be sure you wait for an answer, and deliver it here, to the governor, this evening. Do you mind?’

‘I will take care to do it, your honor :’ replied the lad ; then pocketing the letter, he made his obeisance, and hastened away.

‘A nice, sharp fellow that,’ observed the churchwarden. ‘As to the place, it can never be his ; but he will maintain himself respectably, I doubt not.’

‘I would rather not trust to that,’ said the overseer : ‘we have fellows as sharp as he on our hands, picking oakum here in this workhouse. As to the family, they are as good as on the books already. Hewitt’s life is not worth a day’s purchase ; Grey has promised—that is, I am sure he will find more profitable tenants than an old woman and a pack of children, who have it, besides, for next to nothing. So we may reckon on Goody Green, her girl, whose settlement is certainly here, and the whole batch of grandchildren, including a sickly boy :—a rare discovery you have made for us, Mr. Stratton!’

*‘I have sprung the game, to be sure ; and now sup-*

pose I wing them all into another parish, what will you say?"

'That it's the best of many good turns you have done us,' answered Miles, with a bow: 'and moreover that if any living man can do it, Mr. Stratton is the gentleman.'

'Well, take no notice; time will show.'

When evening came, it found the cottagers seated in their snug kitchen. The widow was busy at her wheel, Helen manufacturing a suit for Willy, out of one that had done good service to James; Mary knitting; James watching the simmerings of his supper, the ingredients for which cross Mr. Buckle had not neglected to supply; and Willy, with no small satisfaction, reciting to Mrs. Barker a hymn that she had desired him to learn. Richard's arrival completed the party; and the story of his interview with the great men, and their condescending inquiries, was eagerly listened to by all. 'How very kind of the gentlemen to take such an interest in us,' observed the widow, whose guileless character rendered her unsuspecting of evil. 'I wish old Buckle had been there,' cried Mary. 'Did they make any particular inquiries about me?' demanded Mrs. Barker; and the toss of the head that ensued on hearing Richard's reluctant negative, bespoke a sense of offended dignity; while James remarked, 'I wonder you wern't too dashed to speak.'

Helen was silent: Richard had passed very delicately over the part relating to her, merely repeating the question as to her place of birth; but she felt a sort of boding uneasiness at heart, probably from her really reflective mind catching at the obvious tendency of the examination pursued. Mrs. Barker looked at her for a moment and exclaimed, 'I shouldn't wonder'—then suddenly checking herself, shook her head, and finished by muttering in a mysterious tone a soliloquy not new from her lips; 'I know the ways of the parish pretty well.'

Prayer closed, as it had commenced, the peaceful and industrious day; and when the widow Green had paid a



tiptoe visit to each simple couch, to ascertain that all was comfortable, with a special reference to that of the sickly boy, she knelt down alone, to commend anew herself and her precious charges to him who is the God of the widow, the Father of the fatherless, and who had promised, in answer to the prayer of faith, he would guide her with his counsel here, and afterward receive her to glory.

Two months glided on, without any material change in the affairs of our cottagers; but the blasts of winter that stripped the trees of their few remaining leaves, and dashed the foam of ocean over the cliffs, bearing it even to the humble roofs that stood sheltered on their western side, proved too severe for Hewitt. He was given over; and every post might be expected to convey the tidings that William Green's cottage had lapsed to the landlord. Many shared in the concern expressed by the neighbors for the result of an application which the kind clergyman had promised to make to the landlord; and in the discomfiture occasioned by the short reply, containing merely a reference to the agent, as being empowered to arrange all such matters in that quarter. This functionary being immediately, but privately applied to by Mr. Barlow, frankly told him that the rent thenceforth to be demanded was so entirely beyond the poor widow's means, that he had felt at liberty to promise a new lease to one who had closed with his terms. The clergyman wisely refrained from communicating this to the family, while as yet the life remained; but secretly busied himself in devising plans for their future support.

One Saturday morning, while the widow Green was occupied in scouring up her house, assisted by Helen, two gentlemen tapped at the door. On their entrance, Mr. Stratton was recognized: the other was a stranger. A respectful reception, and ready answers to some general inquiries having been given, the visitors seated themselves, Mr. Stratton insisting that the widow should do the same, and desiring Helen to continue her employment. *He then proceeded:*

‘There is much kind feeling excited on your behalf, my good woman; matters look very unpromising as to your lease; and I suppose you are prepared for the worst.’

A slight quiver passed over the widow’s lip, as she replied, ‘I trust, sir, that He who orders all things for us, will give us grace to receive it thankfully at his hand: whether it may be what we call good or what we call evil.’

‘Very right: a truly religious person like you can never be cast down by a change in outward affairs; particularly when, as you seem to say, what we call evil may turn out to be really for our good.’

‘That is true enough,’ said his companion, ‘as many can testify.’

‘This gentleman,’ continued Mr. Stratton, ‘is a friend of mine, passing through our place. He comes from a distant town where there are hundreds of families, led by different circumstances to settle there, all of whom are now thankful enough for any event that helped to fix them in such a prosperous place.’

The widow glanced around her, and towards the pretty little window which commanded a wide prospect.

‘I understand your feelings,’ resumed her friend; ‘it is very hard to leave a spot we have been attached to for years, and break up old ties; but, I doubt not, any tie would be easier for you to break than the one binding you to the children to whom you have been both mother and father, these many years.’

‘It is true, sir,’ answered the poor woman: ‘the worst pain that ever smites me is when I think we may be parted and scattered abroad—and they so young!’

‘And you in the decline of life, and likely soon to be wanting the comfort from them that they have found you so ready to impart,’ added Mr. Stratton, looking towards Helen, who was leaning on the dresser with her face concealed.

‘I do hope, I do trust,’ cried the poor widow, while

her tears burst forth, 'that it may please the Lord, in his goodness, to order it so as not to part us yet.'

Mr. Stratton nodded to his companion, who, drawing his chair nearer to her, began: 'That is what we have been considering of, my good lady. You must know, the town where I live is one of the first places in England for furnishing good, healthy, profitable employment for industrious people, from those of your own age down to the small children, whose little nimble fingers get so expert at the easy tasks given to them, that if you happened to have a little boy even of seven years old, he would make a good round sum at the week's end by his own work—or play, you may almost call it.'

'What work may it be, sir?'

'Different sorts: you see we are great manufacturers, and have a vast deal of employment to give—so we had need, for the crowds who come begging for a share in it would distract us, if we had not. As it is, the numbers who are sent away make it a difficult thing to get; but I being able to influence the gentlemen, can always secure a person against disappointment, and get you all into a capital mill.'

'Is it the factories?' said the widow, starting.

'I don't wonder at your being surprised to hear you may be certain of employment,' replied the other: 'but depend on it I shan't deceive you.'

'I have heard much about the factories, sir, but little enough in their favor.'

'To be sure,' observed Mr. Stratton, laughing. 'Those who succeed, settle there, and are too well engaged to run about gossiping; while the disappointed folks spread far and wide, proclaiming like the fox in the fable, how very sour are the grapes they could not reach.'

'That may be,' remarked the widow thoughtfully.

'It is, I assure you,' said the stranger. 'Those who are lucky enough to get fully engaged soon come to live

like gentlemen. Good lodging, capital clothing, the best to eat, and plenty of it: kind neighbors, generous masters, skilful doctors'——

'And fine preachers,' added Mr. Stratton.

'Oh, for those that like fine preaching it is as good as London itself: lots of Bible Societies, missionary meetings, tract depositories'——

'And schools?' asked the widow anxiously.

'Capital schools: day, evening and Sunday schools to no end.'

'We cannot stop long now,' observed Mr. Stratton. 'Think over what you have heard, but don't mention a word of it to anybody at present. In the first place, my friend would be exposed to so many applications he might not be able to serve you effectually; and in the next place, the life in the lease has not yet expired: so you have a chance still.'

'I will not mention it, sir; unless to Mr. Barlow, who is always my true friend.'

'Mr. Barlow! oh, no, by no means: he is the best man alive, and your friend; but then he is other people's friend too. Come, I have good reason for desiring to promise you won't name the matter to anybody till we talk it over again.'

The widow promised: adding that she would answer for Helen too.

'Come here, Helen,' said the kind neighbor. 'Why you are grown quite a woman. Don't you think it would be a nice plan to stop with your good old friend, instead of going out to all sorts of drudgery?'

'Indeed, sir, I should not mind drudgery: but I could not part with *her*,' casting her tearful eyes towards the old lady.

'Nor need you,' said the stranger; 'a strong healthy girl like you may earn enough, and easily, to keep her old hands both quiet and warm. Good bye to you.' And the gentlemen departed.

'Why did you not tell them, granny,' said Helen, when



the visitors had left the cottage, 'that you had relations in the factories?'

'It would have done no good, my dear; and indeed I wanted to have their own account of the matter: for I often thought my daughter Wright had a little over-rated the comforts of the place, because she went against the judgment of her friends; and she is one of those, Helen, who don't like to own they are disappointed.'

'But what a fine thing it must be, if all this is true.'

'It isn't all true, to my knowledge: but the Parliament has been making new laws they say, and all for the benefit of the working people: so it may be truer than I thought at first. Well, we must wait, and see how things turn out, Helen. A higher hand than ours is overruling all for good.'

They resumed their employments; and on the morrow the young people attended the Sunday school, with faces as cheerful and hearts as light, as any in the village. Helen taught her class, Richard his, and the three children, as usual, gave perfect satisfaction to their instructors. From the school they went in modest order to the church, where the widow Green was already in her place. They had proceeded but a few paces homeward, after the service, when a deep toll of the large bell struck them with a startling effect: they paused involuntarily.

'Poor Hewitt,' remarked a gentleman who was passing, 'when did he die?'

'I don't know: I heard yesterday that he could not live many hours.'

Another step or two brought the party so painfully interested in these tidings within a few feet of the humble mound, over which a neat wooden grave-rail extended, bearing the names of William and Sarah Green and their departed children. It was almost too much for the widow; the cottage rose up before her, with all its sad and sweet associations; the past and the future blending *with the present*, in a way they had never done before.

She leaned more heavily on her grandson's arm ; and as with affectionate sympathy he pressed hers closer to his side, a sob—a sound not often heard from her patient lips—burst forth, and then the natural weakness of humanity was conquered by a sweet recurrence to her mind of the words she had just before heard quoted in the pulpit : “ Be still, and know that I am God.”

Nothing was said on the subject : Richard fully understood the extent of what had befallen them ; but he was a boy alike of resolute spirit and of sanguine disposition. The burden that then hung on his arm was dear to him as his life ; and in deep devotion of soul he entered on the new path of duty into which the funeral bell had ushered him, determining that while he had hands to work, neither the aged form beside him nor the youthful beings who followed their tread should know want or sorrow. The untried path presented no obstacles to his inexperienced eye ; and if Richard grieved over the loss of his little patrimony, still more did he rejoice in the conscious acquisition of what was indisputably his own—useful information, industrious habits, and an unblemished character.

At the cottage door they were met by Mrs. Barker, who, with a face where concern was most legibly pictured, took the widow's hand, saying, ‘ If I could save you from what's now likely to come upon you, by walking fifty miles on my bare feet, I'd set out this minute.’

‘ That you would, ma'am,’ exclaimed more than one young voice ; while the widow mildly said, ‘ I know I have a kind, true friend on earth as long as Mrs. Barker is there : but now will you please to defer all talk about these things till to-morrow. We must remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy ; and for all the rest, “ the Lord will provide.” ’

No word of allusion to the event was heard during the remainder of the day : all was cheerfulness, though perhaps not so bright as at some other times. The lodger's studious attentions, her many little bustling kindnesses,

and looks of anxious love, tending to keep the matter very distinctly present to their thoughts ; and once or twice she so far forgot herself as to mutter expressions of admiration, the origin of which none could mistake, who knew the circumstances of the case.

‘ What a difference there is between Mrs. Barker and cross old Buckle ! ’ whispered Mary to Helen. But the next morning, when the pail of milk was handed in, cross old Buckle spoke in tones so gentle, and stroked her head so kindly, and slipped so bright a shilling into her hand, that Mary’s opinion was quite staggered : tripping backward, as usual, in Helen’s path, she exclaimed, ‘ I say, Helen, it is a good thing to be poor and in trouble : everybody does be so kind to one then.’

Alas, poor Mary ! she had much to learn.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MIGRATION.

At the noon-tide hour, Mr. Stratton again appeared, with his friend ; and after expressing regret at the recent event, said, ‘ I am too much hurried to stop now : but to prove to you that the advice we gave is good, my friend has brought a pamphlet, printed and published, giving an account of the matter. Read it carefully, and keep your promise of saying nothing, till we see you again.’

Mrs. Green needed no inducement to read it carefully ; she was wavering on a point of the deepest importance to her and hers : and though clinging to a faint hope of the renewal, until she should hear from Mr. Barlow the result of his visit to the agent, she pondered as inevitable the alternative of dispersion, or migration to the factories. The pamphlet was soon read : it set forth in glowing colors the comfort, the abundance, the independence of those who engaged in the work, fully bearing out her informant in his largest statements. Could she reject such evidence ! No, it would have seemed too much like spurning from her an advantage providentially placed within her grasp ; and she only regretted, on seeing the clergyman approach, that she was not at liberty to communicate to him her bright prospects.

Mr. Barlow’s entrance, however, recalled too vividly the comforts of past days, and awoke her too painfully to present difficulties, to be hailed without strong emotion. He took her hand with a look that prepared her *for the worst*, and said, ‘ Among all earthly changes, how



increasingly precious is the word that assures the believer he has "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

'It is, it is,' replied the widow, wringing her hands; 'but oh, sir, the four walls of this poor cottage have been a home on earth to me that I feel it hard to leave.'

'I know it: the hardest lesson we have to learn is that which convinces us we are strangers and sojourners—pilgrims seeking a better country. Gladly indeed should I have been the bearer of a message that would leave you yet awhile in this quiet retreat: but'—he hesitated.

'We must leave it, sir?'

'I urged the case strongly; I even ventured to promise an increase of rent on your part, but in vain: another applicant had secured the reversion. Let us now consider in what way we can promote your interests, and those of the dear children.'

'Not yet, sir, if you please.'

In vain did the good clergyman remonstrate, telling her he must leave home for some days, and that every hour was precious: she repeated that she would talk it over with him when she saw him again. Reluctantly he quitted the subject; and after much good counsel and scriptural consolation under approaching trials, with fervent prayer, he rose to depart; but turning to the door, said, 'Take a caution, Mrs. Green, from a sincere friend: I know you may be exposed to some inducements to venture on a hasty step before my return. Do not suffer yourself to be tempted, by any show of advantage, into the manufacturing districts. Remember my words, and be wary.'

The widow longed to call him back, and to tell all; but her promise must be kept, and the opportunity was gone. In the evening Mrs. Barker eagerly began on the same subject, and was not a little mortified at meeting a similar repulse. After many attempts at eliciting some *information*, she drew herself up, saying, 'I might take *offence at your being* so close with an old friend; but no

doubt you have your reasons. And I wish,' she added with sudden vivacity, 'I wish that old fox Stratton, who was about here, has not been setting some trap for you—p'rhaps the factories!'

The widow's countenance changed a little, and Helen colored just because she hoped she should not color at that moment.

'Oh, I see how it is,' cried the lodger triumphantly: 'I was right; but surely, dame Green, you arn't such a simpleton as to be gulled by them who are only afraid you should be a burden to them, coming, with this large family, on the parish.'

'The parish!' exclaimed Richard in the most angry tone that he had ever been known to utter.

'Ay, boy, the parish: don't you see, if anything ailed your grandmother or the little ones, though you and Helen might be lucky enough to get a service, you couldn't maintain them; and what must it all come to but that? Oh, I haven't been a beadle's wife and his widow too, for nothing: I know something of the ways of the parish.'

'Mrs. Barker, ma'am,' said Richard, rising and standing as tall as he could, 'there is nobody, next to my grandmother, I respect so much as yourself, ma'am: but as long as this roof is over our heads, ay, and as long as these two hands have strength to dig, I do hope, ma'am, you will never hurt our feelings again, by speaking as if any of my family could go on the parish.' And out he walked with a swelling heart.

'As fine a boy as ever trod on shoe-leather,' observed Mrs. Barker: 'but he is not up to these things. And as for his two hands, and his digging——well, I'll say no more; only don't let yourself be fooled, Molly Green, by them that care less for you than for the saving of a farthing's worth of musty meal.'

This discussion produced its effect on the widow; but not such as was desired by her two disinterested advisers. *The idea of becoming a parish pauper had*

scarcely occurred to her ; but now the thing was presented in a nearer point of view than she could well bear to contemplate. It appeared likely enough that Mr. Stratton was actuated by the motives attributed to him ; but his friend was unconnected with the place ; and then the pamphlet ! *That* would not have been written and printed to deceive her. The contrast was strong : on the one hand pauperism, or, at the very best, a complete separation of the family : on the other, a home, lucrative employment, independence, respectability, all the advantages that schools for the children, and abundant spiritual privileges for them and herself could impart. Besides, her daughter had long been a resident in that very town ; and would now, no doubt, be glad to renew the intercourse with a mother whom she had first disobeyed, then slighted, and reproached with undue partiality for William's family. It was too delightful a prospect to be relinquished : her resolution was formed ; and on the very next day she announced it to her friend Mr. Stratton, who promised to see an agreement entered into with one of the first mill-owners in the town, and to make all requisite arrangements for their removal.

When Mr. Barlow returned, he found things too far gone for his interference. He therefore contented himself with rescuing Richard from the fate of the others, by providing him with a situation where he would enjoy means of improvement, with the prospect of a good business, if he proved diligent and pains-taking ; and with a heavy heart he bestowed his parting benediction on the assembled household the evening preceding their outset. The scene was so changed that a stranger would not have recognized Green's cottage, in the comfortless, bare walls of the all deserted mansion. A sale had taken place that morning, comprising the whole of its simple furniture, save a few cherished articles of small intrinsic value, committed to the care of a kind neighbor ; and two flock-beds, with their accompaniments of blankets and bedding, which the widow had agreed with the boatman.

to convey as luggage, for their passage was to be by canal. These lay closely packed, furnishing seats for the party, who were never, never more to assemble in that humble but beloved abode ; and who might now be said to mourn each apart, over some secret sorrow with which a stranger could not intermeddle. There are seasons when the nearest, the dearest, the most trusted of bosom friends is comparatively a stranger : there are depths of feeling and mazes of thought not to be explored by human eye ; throbs of secret anguish beyond the alleviation of human sympathy. Alone man enters the world ; alone he must launch forth upon eternity ; and between the two periods there is many a moment when, despite himself, man is compelled to feel what it is to be utterly alone.

The young children had indulged in many delightful anticipations of the wonders that they were to behold in a great town ; but these they had only whispered among themselves, since the little sale of household stuff commenced ; for even Willy could enter somewhat into the struggle that was evidently trying the elder portion of the family. They had all felt the parting with Mrs. Barker ; and some of her commiserating expressions, as she stroked their heads and patted their cheeks, had excited a misgiving that partially clouded their gay dreams with a vague foreboding of some unknown evil. James grew languid from fatigue ; Mary had an uneasy apprehension of rivalry in the affection of her friends among new claimants, and all were deeply grieved at the prospect of leaving Richard. His were feelings of no common poignancy ; for, in persuading him to remain, seeking independence for himself in that rural district, Mr. Barlow had dropped some hints with respect to the injurious effect of factory employment on the health and characters of the rest, which, while they confirmed him in his path of duty, gave rise to more distressing apprehensions than the good minister would willingly have excited. He did not know how far the boy's mind had outgrown his years. Helen's



indeed appeared an easier choice ; for the only road that seemed open to her was one which kept her beside her benefactress, holding out a fair prospect of repaying to the family some part of her obligation ; but her young heart had so entwined itself round the objects familiar from infancy, that the breaking up of the little establishment, the removal of each article as it passed into the hands of a purchaser, and the consciousness that in a few hours she must for ever quit that peaceful home, would have been a heavy grief, even had she not imbibed a secret dread of the untried experiment, and shrunk from what her own fancy, as far as it fell below the reality, would picture of the noise, the confusion, and other painful contrasts of a large town.

But none suffered like the widow : she had her portion of what each around her felt, and with it a depressing apprehension that she had acted wrong in preferring the counsel of worldly advisers before that of her long-tried, pious friend. It is no uncommon case to seek direction in prayer, and then to act from the impulse of our own choice, without waiting for an answer. Of selfishness in any shape she stood acquitted, even in her own eyes ; but not so of precipitation. She was, in fact, one among many victims to a most nefarious device ; the waste of human life in the factories, like that in the plantations of the west, occasions so pressing a demand for a supply of new laborers, that it gives rise to a traffic not very dissimilar from the slave trade. A brisk market is always open ; and those who consider it a meritorious work to decrease the burdens of their respective parishes at any cost, are equally ready to recruit it with their paupers, as the natives of Madagascar of old were to sell their prisoners. Even where no such desire exists among parochial authorities, emissaries are employed, who, by means of such false representations as those contained in the pamphlet shown to the widow, written and published for that express purpose, allure the *industrious countryman* from his healthful sphere, to perish,

with his little ones, amid the noxious exhalations of those unnatural dens. It is no fiction that such books are circulated in districts remote from the scenes described in them; or that they often prevail when other means would not succeed.

But the die was cast, the cottage was dismantled, and the little party who sat grouped on the large bundle were to know their place within its walls no more. Evening was closing; a bright moon had surmounted the tops of the old elms that separated the two adjoining fields, and looked in, as if for a farewell greeting, through the interstices of a woodbine, that had been carefully trained over the casement, and formed a grateful lattice. Mary broke the long silence.

‘Our poor honeysuckle! I do hope whoever gets the place will take care of the honeysuckle.’

‘Ah,’ sighed Richard, ‘many a pleasant hour I have passed, training and trimming that old plant. Some hand will cut it down before long.’

‘Never mind,’ said James, ‘I’ll have one just like it growing over our window at M. It will make us more happy.’

Tears sprang into Helen’s eye at the contrast thus forced upon her of the future with the past. The widow felt it also, and remarked, ‘We are not going to a place of ease and enjoyment, my dear; but to labor for a living in a very different situation. The only thing we can promise ourselves there, of all that has made us so happy here, is the presence of God.’ Then clasping her hands, and looking up with a burst of tears, she exclaimed, ‘If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence!’

‘The answer to that prayer, granny,’ said Richard, ‘is very gracious: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give rest.” Honeysuckles on the window there may not be; but the sweet moonlight will come through, and remind you of what Mr. Barlow said last Sunday, when *he preached on the light shining in a dark place.*

One thing, I am sure, you will carry away with you, *that* has helped more than anything else to make us happy here, and that is the old Bible, granny.' The boy turned away to hide his tears, overpowered by the thought that he must no more listen to the sacred book in the midst of those he loved so well.

The moonbeam, now broad and strong, fell upon them as they sat, and bathed them in its silvery light, passing through the pure clear atmosphere peculiar to a healthful sea-coast. They looked upon each other, and again to the fair orb, while the natural thought so beautifully expressed by the poet, seemed spontaneously to arise in their comparatively uncultivated minds, that it would be a sort of rallying point for their fond gaze, when widely severed in place and circumstance. After a silence of some minutes, the widow called on Helen to repeat the twenty-third psalm; and never had the preciousness of its soothing assurance so commended itself to their hearts, as while in the low deliberate accents of deep feeling, each clause fell from her quivering lip. They then kneeled down, and fervent, though broken by many sobs, was the prayer of that fond parent as she commended the children of her anxious love, together with herself, into the hands of Him who is a Father to the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, in his holy habitation. Oh, it is an awful thought that so many believing, confiding prayers of the poor destitute are recorded in the book of His remembrance, whose piercing eye is never for one moment averted from the hidden plannings of the mercenary deceiver's heart! Very terrible will be the day of public inquisition and divine retribution. God keeps silence now: the oppressor secretly flatters his own soul that the Lord is even such a one as himself: and the sufferer is tempted to ask, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?—is his promise come utterly to an end?" No: he hath appointed a day for the open vindication *alike of his justice and his faithfulness—a day that both shall see, when, in the presence of men, of angels, and*

of devils, it shall be shewn that the Judge of all the earth doeth right.

The little family, so barbarously exiled from their industrious home, to avert a possible, a paltry burden from the parish books, and so craftily ensnared into lingering destruction to swell the gains of a wealthy manufacturer, arose from their knees, exchanged one parting embrace in silence, under the subduing influence which they had just besought, and presently separated for the night. Richard, after accompanying the travellers to the doors of two neighboring cottages, where beds were hospitably prepared for their few hours' rest, returned to fling himself upon the bundle, in the agony of a sorrow no longer to be repressed; and the moon had stolen her soft beam away from the little casement, ere the boy had wept himself to sleep.

We will not accompany the wanderers through every stage of their progress: an agreement had indeed been made with the barge-owner, to whose charge they were committed; but abundant opportunity was left for him to advance demands alike unexpected and unreasonable. It was a sad specimen of what they might look for among mercenary strangers; but even the imposition which pressed so heavily on their very slender purse was less galling than the coarse familiarity and contemptuous rudeness alternately exhibited toward them. Disrespect was new to the widow Green: the independence both of her disposition and circumstances, together with her exemplary line of conduct towards the helpless young charges who shared her generous care, had imparted a moral elevation to her character, demanding and receiving the homage of a general deference from her equals, with more than common courtesy on the part of those above her. She was now to learn the value of an humbling dispensation; and in the pain inflicted by it, she first discovered how needful it was. There are corruptions in every human heart, hidden even from the knowledge of its possessor, until particular circumstances



are so ordered as to bring them forth to his view. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," is the aspiration of many a Christian who little thinks what a startling process will commence in answer to his prayer.

Helen Fleetwood was a girl of delicate mind, such as is often found in our sequestered villages, under the guardianship of watchful prudence, more especially when influenced by early, simple piety. There was nothing in her character unusually elevated above the class to which she belonged; but it owed something of its finer texture to the scenery of her native place, and its association with a tale of infant bereavement, of parental sorrow, that she indeed could scarcely remember, but which had often been related to her with touching pathos, though in homely phrase, by the fishermen's families around. By brooding on these, as she marked the rolling of the billows that had once engulfed her father, she acquired a more contemplative, and perhaps a more imaginative turn of thought than most of her young companions, while a modest reluctance to make her own concerns more prominent than was suitable for so humble a person habituated her to what Mary termed keeping her own counsel. Often did the curious, loquacious little girl devote her ingenuity to the task of discovering some of Helen's 'plots' for cutting out a pinafore to the best advantage in point of saving, or reclaiming some square foot of waste ground for a plantation of herbs. Helen, in truth, had no mystery about her: she was rather reserved; but Mary was an indefatigable hunter after the marvellous, and not always to be convinced by the evidence of her own senses, that she was capable of a mistake.

Whatever in Helen's character partook of noble and generous—and there was very much of both—was now brought into full exercise. She felt with poignancy the rudeness of various kinds to which she was, for the first time in her life, subjected; and once or twice she was *about to complain* to her natural friend of the coarse lan-

guage uttered in her hearing ; but a glance at the widow's care-worn countenance, with the consciousness that she was now scarcely less helpless than herself, silenced the girl. She only kept nearer to her side, and strove by talking in a louder and more cheerful tone than usual to withdraw the attention of her little party from many things unfit to hear. One of the men, struck by her conduct, swore she was an honest, good girl ; wished his little Sally might grow up like her, and restrained his comrades from further profanity and rude jesting. Helen secretly thanked the Giver of all wisdom for guiding her to such a course ; and prayed for a more abundant supply according to his precious promise, that to such as ask he will give liberally and upbraid not.

The passage was long, tedious, uncomfortable, and attended with serious loss to their finances ; but no remedy could be obtained ; and with a heavy heart the widow released her bedding from the master, who threatened to seize it, if his exorbitant demands were not satisfied. They left the barge, and all other feelings were soon absorbed in wonder at the size of the town, and the extreme length, narrowness, and filth of the street, or rather alley, where they were directed to find Mrs. Wright. Above all annoyances, the oppressive weight of the atmosphere was felt and complained of by each ; but far more sickening was the air of the low court into which they turned previous to entering Mrs. Wright's abode.

They were kindly welcomed by this daughter of the widow Green, who struck Helen as being altogether the most unlike her mother of any person she had beheld : as dissimilar, in fact, as the apartment they had entered was to the cottage they had left. Here, on dusky walls, stained with every variety of sombre discoloration, were stuck a number of the most tawdry prints, evidently quite fresh, and placed there for a particular display : the window, incapable as it was of admitting much light under the *best circumstances*, was rendered opaque by

dirt, and festooned with cobwebs ; yet a struggle to look fine was manifest throughout the whole establishment, including the mistress, who, though she had not combed out her matted locks, had surmounted them with a cap of unusual form, decorated with showy ribands. Of ornaments there was no lack, but of neatness, cleanliness, comfort, respectability, nothing relieved the eye : above all, it wanted cheerfulness.

After the first affectionate greeting, and some tears shed on the cheek of her long-absent daughter, the widow kindly inquired for the rest of her family.

‘ The children won’t be in till after dusk,’ replied Mrs. Wright ; ‘ and as for their father he will come about the same time.’

Some arrangements were then made : an inner room, intolerably close to be sure, but rather cleaner than the other, was pointed out for their temporary use. Here they were to remain until a suitable lodging was found, after being installed in their new situations. By the time their bedding was unpacked, and their personal neatness improved, after the fatiguing journey, evening was come ; and the village party returned to the parlor, as Mrs. Wright had called it, just as her family entered it from the street.

There was a pause—almost a movement of recoil on the widow’s part, as this group of her grand-children met her view ; while a hasty glance of involuntary comparison bespoke the mother’s consciousness of a contrast such as words can but faintly portray. Stepping between them, she hastily remarked, ‘ It is well for the children that poor William fancied a country life ; for to be sure it does make them look more fresh and healthy, though town-bred young people may be ever so much genteeler.’

## CHAPTER IV.

### NEARER APPROACH.

LET no one suppose we are going to write fiction, or to conjure up phantoms of a heated imagination, to aid the cause which we avowedly embrace. Names may be altered, characters may be grouped, with some latitude of license ; but not an incident shall be coined to serve the purpose, however good, so far as relates to the main subject—that is, to the factories of this, our free and happy England. Vivid indeed, and fertile in devices must the fancy be that could invent a horror beyond the bare, every-day reality of the thing ! Nay, we will set forth nothing but what has been stated on oath, corroborated on oath, and on oath confirmed beyond the possibility of an evasive question. Neither will we lift the veil that piety and modesty would draw over the hidden atrocities of this diabolical child-market. Blasphemy and indecency may, they do abound, turning every mill into a pandemonium ; but it is not needful to sully our pages with either. We will exhibit the tree, we will analyze the soil where it grows, the elements that nourish, the hands that culture it, and the fruit which it ultimately produces ; but the secret circulation of its poisonous sap we will not so bare as to contaminate the mind of a youthful reader, or to harrow up the soul of any one. Let the pestilence preserve the cloud of darkness in which it walks ; we only desire to show the *withered remains of its poor blighted victims.*



The group that entered Mrs. Wright's dwelling, and whom their mother's instinctive movement had partially screened from view while she uttered her deprecating remark, quickly drew round the table, and commenced an eager attack on the provisions before them. It consisted of three children, a girl and two boys, at whose ages it was impossible to guess with any hope of accuracy. Little difference appeared in their height as they sat, the tallest not exceeding that of Mary Green ; but the stoop of his projecting head, the retiring curve of his chest, and the disproportionate length of his arms, betrayed a deficiency or a perversion of natural growth, which was farther confirmed by the very settled expression of a countenance by no means prepossessing. Next to him, in stature and in place, sat a comparatively stout and straight little fellow, but with an aspect so vacant, so stupefied, that he seemed to be under the influence of a powerful narcotic. The third was the spectre of a very pretty girl, whose naked arms resembled ivory wands rather than limbs of natural flesh and blood, while her hair, black as the raven's wing, thin as the gossamer thread, thrown back from her temples, and falling, or rather floating down to her very narrow shoulders, set off the deadly white of her complexion with such effect that she seemed like one in whose veins the current of life had already ceased to circulate. The eyes, generally downcast, were shaded by deep, silken lashes ; but when raised, the broad, unflinching stare of the girl was oppressive. Helen, who, sitting opposite, had fixed a look of interest on her, encountered one of these sudden gazes, and shrank before it, with an undefined sensation of alarm.

Meanwhile Mrs. Wright sustained a voluble part, plying her mother with questions, and interrupting her answers with much irrelevant matter. At length the old lady seized an interval to ask, 'Where is Phœbe, your eldest ?'



‘There,’ replied her daughter, pointing to the dark-haired girl, ‘that’s Phœbe.’

‘I—, I believe I have made a mistake; it was Sarah I meant to inquire for.’

‘She is not at home just now,’ said Mrs. Wright coloring a little, ‘you will see her by and by;’ then added, ‘this is Charles, and the little one is John.’

‘And the other three?’ Mrs. Wright shook her head, and lifted the corner of her apron to her eyes; while Charles with a shrug, said abruptly, ‘All gone, grandmother; dead all five of them; and a happy deliverance it was.’

‘Heaven is better than earth,’ ejaculated the mother, raising her eyes.

A glance that passed between Charles and Phœbe at these words, a suppressed grin on the face of the former, and a sidelong look of scorn from his sister, excited the astonishment of their cousins, and increased Helen’s uneasiness. The widow did not perceive it: she was painfully recalling some statements in her daughter’s letters, now clearly shown to have been wilfully false. Wright’s entrance proved a seasonable interruption, and his cordial greeting a contrast to the heartless scene.

‘My good mother,’ he said, affectionately saluting her, ‘it is many a long year since we met, and bravely you seem to have weathered it. Young people, you are kindly welcome all. Why, so many rosy cheeks are like a flower-show in the town of M.’ He passed his eye from them to his own children, and compressing his lips, as if to stifle a sigh, sat down.

By this time, Johnny’s evident drowsiness had so increased, that his head fell upon his brother’s shoulder, who, with a rough push, sent it back against Phœbe: her shrill scolding exclamation half waked the poor boy, and with an unintelligible mutter he rose to stagger towards a press-bed, turned up against the wall. His mother loudly called on him to return; but the father, saying,

‘Poor fellow, let him rest awhile,’ rose and let down the untidy couch, on which he instantly flung himself.

‘Is he ill?’ asked James, in a half whisper.

‘Not he,’ replied Charles; ‘’tis seldom he keeps awake so long.’ He rose as he spoke, or rather stood; for no perceptible difference was made in his height by the change of position, owing to the curvature of his legs. The deformity was striking, and the irregular shuffle with which he crossed the room painful to witness. The widow averted her eyes, and hastily inquired of Wright whether he knew the cotton mill of the Messrs. Z——. ‘Of course I do, for my children work there, but ——’

‘Never mind his buts, mother,’ interrupted the wife, ‘he is famous for them.’

‘I have a letter of recommendation to that firm,’ resumed Mrs. Green; ‘and to-morrow I wished to deliver it, as Mr. Stratton charged me to avoid delay; yet I should like to make a few inquiries beforehand.’ In fact, the discovery of her other grand-children being employed in it was the reverse of an inducement to place their cousins there.

‘Take my advice,’ said Wright, ‘if you have a good word spoken for you to any mill-owner, act upon it. You’ll soon learn the value of a friend at the head.’

The widow could not but acquiesce in this; and when the family party broke up, with a prayerless, cold good night, she in their own apartment commended her little flock to the covenanted mercies of God in Christ Jesus, and soon saw the three younger ones in a sound sleep. Helen, however, had never felt more wakeful; anxious thoughts were crowding on her mind. When all was hushed save the brawling voices and rattling wheels that seemed interminably to distract the streets, she gave utterance to her feelings.

‘Granny, this place is very different from the quiet home we have left; and the people we saw on our way are very different, too, from our old neighbors. What a *comfort* it is to know that the best friend of all is with us

here as much as in our own home, though we cannot see Him !”

‘A comfort indeed, dear child : and we shall need it more and more to uphold us now. I fear we have a thorny path before us.’

‘Never mind that, so long as it is the right path ; you know who has said, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”’

‘And how are we to know, Helen, that we are in the right path ?’

‘I think, Granny, while we are striving to do our duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call us, and are looking to him for help and strength, and trying to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men, both with our lips and in our lives, that we may hope we are not out of the good way.’

‘And do you think, Helen, you shall be able to do this, if you get among bad people who try to tempt you to wickedness ; and to laugh you out of your religion ?’

‘Indeed I don’t know : there is nothing good in me, and I seem to tremble when I look forward. Now, Granny, will you pray with me, that the Lord God may be to us, as He has promised to be to his people, a Father of the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow ?’

The prayer was immediately offered amid many tears and sighs ; for both were oppressed with a weight that they knew not how to sustain, except by casting the burden on the Lord.

When they rose, the poor old woman tenderly embraced her orphan charge, and blessed her for leading her to that most comforting refuge. Helen answered,

‘The truth is, dear Granny, I have always thought more than I spoke ; but now I see you are likely to have many difficulties and few helps, I desire to be, after my poor fashion, more useful to you ; and I want to get over my unwillingness to speak out. Oh, my mother,’ she added, with a fresh burst of tears, ‘I fear we are come

to a bad place, and these poor little lambs?— she could not go on.

‘Tell me, what have you seen or heard to cause such alarm?’

‘Not much; but two or three things passed that distressed me. Phæbe, who is, as you first thought, the eldest, and two years older than me, though she is so little, said that Mary might be passed, with the doctor’s help, for thirteen, and Willy for more than nine, and so get higher wages. When I told her it would be an untruth to say they were more than eleven and eight, she and her brother made quite a mock of me, saying nobody minded such nonsense here: and then they told me some cases of such wicked deceit, that it frightened me to hear of them. They laughed the more at me; and said you would soon learn, like others, to make the best bargain you could of the children.’

‘What else, Helen?’ exclaimed the widow, who saw she hesitated here. ‘Tell me all, my child; for it is of great importance I should know it now.’

‘I thought so, Granny: or I would never have been a tell-tale, to grieve you, and to expose these poor young people. They informed me that their sister Sarah, whom you were asking for, was made, as they said, too good a bargain of; and that from early over-work in the mill, bad treatment, and other injuries—they did not say what—she is such an object that her mother kept her out of our sight. She is up stairs in a little loft, not likely to live long. All the others died of early consumption.’

The widow was petrified at a tale which, in addition to its other horrors, proved her daughter to have been guilty of the most systematic falsehood. Helen resumed:

‘From all they said, I feared it was likely you might be deceived into making some agreement that you would afterwards be sorry for: therefore I tell you now. I think, Granny, you had better take us to the gentleman *you have the letter to*, rather than a stranger.’ Then,



seeing the deep grief and alarm depicted on her friend's countenance, she added, ' You know, all Christ's people must bear a cross ; and really we have had none to bear, we have been so happy and prosperous. So it is reasonable to expect it now. Besides, is it not a mercy to be forewarned ?'

Again the poor widow thanked her young counsellor ; who, smiling through tears, said, ' I have often prayed that your kindness to me, a friendless child, might be like bread cast on the waters to be found again after many days : but as yet I have done nothing for you, my own dear Granny.'

They went to rest ; and at an hour much earlier than even their usual habits had accustomed them to awake at, they were startled from repose by the ringing of a large bell, followed by the shrill tones of Mrs. Wright in the adjoining room, calling on her children to ' get up and be off.' It evidently required some rough persuasion to divorce Johnny from his bed ; and a blow, followed by an angry cry, was heard. After the lapse of a very few minutes, the door slammed after the departing trio, who were evidently sent forth fasting. As for any morning devotion, it was but too plain that such a thing was wholly incompatible with the habits and feelings of the family. In one point of view, this rather calmed the widow's rising apprehensions ; she knew that wherever the tree is evil the fruit must be so too ; and she strove to persuade herself that what this household were in the town of M—— they would have been in her own peaceful village, or in any other place. Resolving, therefore, to be so guarded in her proceedings as to avoid any trap that might be laid, she strove to picture to herself a scene of piety, peace and comfort, when her dear children were once finally engaged in the work which she resolved should be rather below than above their years and capabilities. Mr. Stratton's letter was her sheet anchor ; for even if he did wish to separate them from the parish it was manifestly his interest to make such absence agree-



able to them; and so to prevent their return. Thus she reasoned with herself; and rose with a somewhat lightened spirit.

Not so Helen: she had a presentiment of evil, as it seemed. In reality it was only the effect of her natural sagacity drawing plain conclusions from obvious premises. The boatmen on the canal had dropped hints of which all that she had yet seen were explanatory; the aspect of the town classes where she had passed along, the demeanor of Mrs. Wright, the appearance, manners and communications of her elder children, with what she had overheard of the rousing scene that morning, all combined with her deep mistrust of Mr. Stratton, and the anxious warnings of the good clergyman, to prepare her for bitter trials. Yet it was not for herself that Helen trembled; her fervent love for the companions of her childhood—the tenderness with which her bosom yearned towards them on the approach of even the lightest calamity, and the consciousness of their truly helpless state in the midst of a callous population where they had not one friend—for she could not concede that sacred title to their new found relations—all led her to an utter oblivion of self in the matter, and added poignancy to her fears for them.

It was Saturday; and Mrs. Wright, in expatiating on the advantages of beginning work on Monday morning, dropped a few hints that convinced her mother she would feel a satisfaction in seeing them settled in another abode. Desirous of choosing one within an easy distance of the mill where the children would be employed, she could not delay her application; and eleven o'clock saw her, accompanied by her neat and healthful young party, making the best of their way to the counting house of the Messrs. Z. A person officiating as clerk at a high desk, scarcely deigned any notice of the respectful salutation of the visitor, but continued writing, until, a little hurt at his discourtesy, the old lady drew forth her letter, which *was endorsed Private*, requesting to know whether he

was the gentleman there addressed. The clerk took it in silence, surveyed, squeezed, and examined it; then slowly rising, tapped at a door, and handed the epistle to some one within.

After a lapse of a few minutes, a gentleman of fashionable appearance issued from the inner room; and after contemplating the group, asked, 'Well, good woman, are you the person mentioned by Mr. Stratton in this letter?'

'I am sir; I am Mary Green, from L.'

'And these are your grandchildren?'

'Three of them, sir: and the other is also under my care.'

'Mr. Stratton,' said Mr. Z., 'has requested me to provide work for them: I believe I can do it. Here, Abel, write a note to M., and mind this.' He pointed out a passage in the letter, at which the clerk gave a knowing smile, and proceeded to pen a few lines, which he folded and sealed.

While this was being done, the widow respectfully informed Mr. Z. that high wages was not so much their object, as work proportioned to their strength, and sufficient intervals for instruction and proper relaxation: but he interrupted her, without taking his eyes from the newspaper which he was reading, 'All that, my good woman, you must settle with my agent: I have nothing further to do in the matter.' And he returned to his apartment.

The agent was in another building, and busily employed in making out a number of returns. As he snatched the note which she tendered, the widow thought she had never seen a less prepossessing countenance; but she retracted her hasty judgment, when, on glancing his eye over its contents, Mr. M. closed the large volume before him, and leaning his arms upon it, bent forward with a complacent smile, inviting her to be seated on a neighboring chair, while the young people were directed to occupy a bench near the wall.

‘So, Mrs. Green, it appears you have the good luck to come well recommended to our principal, Mr Z.’

‘Yes, sir, and he referred me to you.’

‘A nice party of young hands; let’s see, what are their ages? but no, we’ll say nothing of that just yet. Of course you will make a long agreement, having such an advantage at entering.’

‘No, sir; I wish to make the agreement for a short time on trial.’

‘Trial! Pho—be advised by me; don’t drive away good fortune when it comes to your door. Enter them for a couple of years at least.’

‘Oh, no,’ exclaimed the widow, who was firmly resolved to do nothing rashly, ‘I must at present only engage them by the week; but if all turns out as I hope, we can then agree for a longer period.’

‘You are quite wrong: however, waiving that point, till we see to others—let me tell you the scale of wages. With the ages you and I have nothing to do—the doctor settles that, and these children are so well-grown that he is not likely to under-rate them. In fact some people are so naughty as to mislead the doctor, by letting him think the youngsters are as old as they look, not what the parish registers make them: and as we can’t get at the registers, they have it all their own way, you know.’

‘I should be sorry to act such a part, sir.’

‘Of course, of course: they are, as I said, naughty people; but they reconcile it to their consciences by arguing that it is the actual strength, not the actual age of a person which fits him for labor; and that if a child at eleven years old has the substance and muscle of thirteen it is perfectly fair to rate him accordingly, and to let him earn the wages of thirteen, which are far better. So you see the people know how to beguile us.’

‘And if they did not,’ thought the widow, ‘you are ready enough to teach them the way of deceiving.’ She then asked where she should find the doctor.

‘I should not wonder if he dropped in about this time,’

replied her new friend. 'We may wait a few minutes. Meanwhile I'll tell you something of the work.' He did so: and a very favorable account it was, particularly the circumstance of a new provision that the children should attend school daily during the week. To all her purposed stipulations he returned so ready and smiling an assent, with regard to the freedom and comfort of her children, that in a mind less willing to judge of others by its own artless honesty some suspicion would have been suggested. The good widow, however, attributed it all to the kind word of Mr. Stratton, considering his letter a sufficient ground for the unusual attention paid to her wishes.

And so it was: for Mr. Stratton had made over this helpless but active and industrious family to those who were, in return, so effectually to lime them, as to preclude the possibility of their becoming burthens on the parish of L., and had, at the same time, instructed his friends by a few pithy hints how to bait the trap that was to enclose the victims within its iron fence



## CHAPTER V.

### ENTRANCE UPON FACTORY LIFE.

THE persons with whom our agent had principally had to do, in reference to the youthful candidates for mill-labor, were too generally reducible under two heads—those who knew little or nothing of the legalized regulations, and those who were well disposed to evade them. To the latter class the widow Green evidently did not belong: to the former she probably did. In fact, the good woman was totally ignorant on the subject, and had it not been for the warning communicated by Helen, she would have come altogether unprepared. Vague, however, as that warning was, it induced her to put into her pocket-book certificates of the children's baptism and age, furnished by Mr. Barlow, and with the imparted wisdom which is not only pure but peaceable, she placed them in the surgeon's hands before anything could be said. He regarded her with a look of kindness, not unmixed with pity, when she announced herself as the only surviving friend of the orphan party before him.

'Helen Fleetwood,' read the surgeon, as he opened the first paper, 'born so and so: then, my girl, you are now past sixteen?'

'Stop, stop,' cried Mr. M., 'we have nothing to do with certificates. The ordinary strength and appearance, doctor, is the rule.'

'We may also be informed of the age.'

'Well, well, there will be no difficulty in that. The



two next are unquestionably both thirteen and over ; the youngest nine ; therefore—

‘No, sir,’ interrupted the widow ; ‘the little girl is not even twelve ; nor this boy much more than eight.’

‘Then why did you bring him here, good woman ? You of course know that children are not admissible to our mills under nine years. The fact is, that little fellow wants but a few days or so of the requisite age ; and having the strength and appearance fully, you would not condemn him to idleness and vice, for the mere formality of the thing ; come, doctor, fill the certificate.’

‘Excuse me, sir,’ said the widow, modestly but firmly. ‘I cannot wrong this gentleman, by allowing him to certify what I know to be untrue. There is the parish register ; you will see the child is only eight years and a half.’

‘Then he must stand aside,’ said the surgeon, while Mr. M. wrecked the nib of a pen upon his thumb-nail, with looks of evident vexation.

‘Now for you, my lad. Past thirteen, I suppose ?’

‘Yes, sir.’

The surgeon mused for a moment. He had looked in the boy’s pale face, felt his slender arm, and almost transparent fingers. Something appeared struggling in his bosom ; and with a sudden look full at the agent, he said, ‘I cannot certify.’

‘Not certify ! doctor, I have seen you pass many far younger, and quite as weakly, without deducting anything on that score.’

‘Very probably you have, Mr. M.; nevertheless I cannot in the present case agree to do it. His sister has more the appearance, and the reality, too, of the average strength than he has. I could conscientiously enter her in his stead.’

‘You are quite right,’ exclaimed the agent, ‘let it be so ; and the exchange will be an advantage to all parties.’

The widow said nothing, but presented again the open

certificate of Mary's actual age to the surgeon, who, half smiling, proceeded to fill up the forms that left both her and her brother under the nominal protection afforded to children; for the legislature, by its latest act on the subject, recognizes as young men and women all who have completed their thirteenth year, and assigns to them the labor suited to adults!

The surgeon was bowed out by Mr. M., who proceeded with no very gracious looks to make the entries. Meanwhile the widow's heart smote her with painful self-reproach. She regarded the sickly boy as wholly unfit for even the light tasks that she had been assured would be assigned to him; and resolving to make any sacrifice rather than injure him, she requested the agent to postpone the insertion of his name for a while.

'Nonsense, nonsense, my good lady. He will be rated at nine years old, and worked accordingly; and paid accordingly, too, thanks to your register, and the doctor's conscience,' he added, with a sneering laugh.

But she still objected. In vain did the gentleman remonstrate, and in vain did he argue, except that the boy himself became anxious to undertake what was represented as being rather a pastime than a task; the widow remained inflexible; and the agent, after entering Helen and Mary, closed the book with an air of displeasure: then sternly told them to be at their posts by six o'clock on the Monday morning. He refused to listen to Mrs. Green's queries as to the nature and duration of their employment, which he said she might make out among her acquaintance, adding that they need not stay there any longer. With a glow on her aged cheek, the widow led her companions to the door, secretly congratulating herself that she had not been beguiled into a more permanent engagement for the two girls.

When Mrs. Wright heard that not only Willy but James was exempted from the agreement, she lacked words to express her astonishment and regret.

\* *'To be sure, this boy's cheeks are not so red as the*

others, and he isn't so overgrown as Mary; but if all that are not stronger or stouter than he were taken from work, a precious town of young idlers it would be, and the mills might stop at once.'

'I don't wish to be an idler, aunt,' said the boy, coloring.

'More shame for you if you did, and your grandmother that has tended you all your life long to have you thrown on her hands now, when she ought to be supported by you.'

The boy burst into tears. 'Granny,' said he, 'I will work, and nobody shall hinder me.'

'Be quiet, my dear child,' replied the widow soothingly; then, turning to her daughter, she said, with considerable earnestness, 'Sally, I shall be always glad to talk over your family concerns with you at proper times, and to have your advice; but I must not be dictated to in what concerns these children; particularly in their presence.'

'Oh, to be sure?' said the other, as she violently swung a pot from over the fire; 'William's children must be gentlefolks anywhere; and their poor relations, that live by the hard labor of themselves and their little ones, may be proud of the honor of serving them.'

This unfeeling reproach sank deep into the hearts it was intended to wound; but no reply was given. After a short pause the widow inquired about the schools, and was sullenly informed that there were plenty, from among which she could make her choice.

'And the Sunday school?'

'Wright can tell you about that; but it's little use, for they will be too tired to go there.'

'I am not tired a bit,' said Mary.

'Tell me that this day fortnight,' retorted her aunt, with a significant look.

Dinner being dispatched, the widow announced her intention of seeking a lodging to which they might remove on the Monday: Mrs. Wright offered some faint

opposition, protesting they were quite welcome to the best she had to give : but her mother pleaded the advantage of settling at once ; and having been told where to look for a respectable abode, she again sallied forth with her little band.

It was market day : but the busiest hour of traffic being past, the country people were leaving the town, and our villagers had opportunity to contemplate the lower orders of the inhabitants now perambulating the streets, to pick up at reduced prices the refuse of the market and shops. Great as was the contrast between the dense smoky atmosphere of these narrow, gloomy, filthy streets, and the pure sea-breeze of their own sweet native village, it was less painful than that which marked the population. Health, cleanliness and good humor, seemed almost equally banished from among them. Of bold, noisy mirth, drunken songs, and rude, coarse jesting there was indeed no scarcity : the poor strangers often shrank back in terror from the sounds they heard and the sights they beheld, but not even little Willy was tempted to smile by anything about him. Groups of children there were, and far more numerous than might have been expected, considering the factories were all full ; but they seemed nearly divisible into two classes—incorrigible, reckless idlers, and poor, enervated sickly objects, who had crawled forth from the surrounding abodes of poverty to mingle with them. Still hoping to reach a quarter where beer-houses and gin-shops should be fewer, and comparative respectability more apparent, the widow passed on ; but she found herself receding too far from the mill of the Messrs. Z., and the day fast closing too. She therefore fixed upon a small tenement, the occupier of which was a decent old man, who offered the accommodation of two apartments, such as she required ; and having exchanged references, she secured the rooms for a week ; resolving to make no more permanent engagement without sufficient deliberation. Alas ! the poor widow little knew



how total a sacrifice of her independence she had already made.

It was now getting late ; the street-lamps were lighted, and before they set out on their return, the factories had poured forth their thousands of laborers, from the puny infant of six or seven years, to the grey-headed man whose broken-down aspect proclaimed him as unfit for toil as they. It was a spectacle of interest and wonder to the young Greens to behold such a rush of children coming from or hastening towards every point of the compass. Some shouting as they bounded along, in mischief or in sport pushing their quieter companions from the path, but the greater number evidently feeble from exhaustion, jaded and ill-tempered, and frequently resenting, in expressions of fearful impiety, the annoyances of their more lively comrades. The widow shuddered as this occurred within her hearing, but still more were her feelings harrowed, when an involuntary pressure of her arm, which rested in Helen's, induced her to follow the direction of the girl's agitated look, and she beheld several mere children emerging from the doors of a gin-shop, flushed with the liquid flame which they had been swallowing. She hurried her young party onwards: secretly resolving that unattended they should never stir through those polluting scenes ; and clung to the arm of her sympathizing supporter, with sensations of mingled thankfulness, pity, and self-reproach ; for Helen, to whom alone she now looked for solace and for aid, was of years so tender, of mind so innocent, and disposition so retiring, that she needed for herself the guardianship that others must seek at her hands.

Bewildered and heart-sickened, she reached her daughter's abode ; and, on entering, heard a faint, querulous voice, exclaiming, ' Hav'n't I suffered enough, without being turned out of your company for my misfortunes ?'

' *Let her stay, mother,*' added Charles ; ' *they're*



nailed now fast enough ; and what signifies their seeing her !

Thus prepared, the strangers exhibited no surprise at the addition made to the party within. The girl who occupied a low chair near the chimney corner, appeared to be naturally much taller than Phœbe, but was so twisted and crooked that she scarcely reached her height. Every feature betokened consumption far advanced ; and her large, glassy grey eyes seemed to rove about in quest of some object to interest them ; while an expression of melancholy discontent showed how vain was the search. A large shawl pinned close round the throat fell over her shoulders and body ; and she was evidently helpless as an infant.

The widow, merely asking, ' Is this my grand-daughter Sarah ? ' imprinted an affectionate kiss on the pale cheek that was raised to receive it ; and the girl's faint smile went more to her heart than anything she had yet met under that roof.

' Grandmother,' said she, ' I am quite glad to see you : are those my cousins ? ' They all surrounded her immediately, and each had something kind to say. Helen approached last, and gently telling her that though not a cousin she hoped she might be owned as a friend, saluted the poor girl, who, fixing her full eyes on her face, abruptly said, ' I like you very much, Helen Fleetwood.'

Mrs. Wright seemed rather puzzled by this scene : she understood not the feeling awakened in the generous minds of her guests by a spectacle that she expected would have excited their disgust ; for it was already apparent to all, that poor Sarah had only one arm, and that one so contracted as to be nearly useless ; while her feet were bent in, until she rested on the ankle-bones. ' You see,' said her mother, ' what an object she is. The arm was lost by an accident, and all the rest came from convulsions and fits.'

' *Don't be frightened,*' said Charles, who saw the chil-

dren shrink back at the last words. 'She has no fits now, poor thing !' and he looked at her with an expression of tenderness which his countenance had hardly seemed capable of assuming.

When Wright came in, he answered all inquiries respecting the Sunday school nearly to the widow's satisfaction. He said the teachers were chiefly taken from among the adult working-people ; and that there was plenty of the Bible. Respecting the day-schools, he told her that the children must produce every Monday a voucher from some master or mistress of having attended their school for two hours each day on any six days out of the week : but he added, that there were ways of managing that without being over-punctual. His wife interrupted him : ' Oh, you need not talk of that : mother's conscience is too particular. Here are these two boys going to be gentlemen at large, because one is weakly for his age, and the other wants a few weeks of being nine !'

' You won't be able to afford that, mother,' said Wright, shaking his head ; ' you must get the little fellow into a silk-mill, where age is no objection, and the hours are shorter.'

Both the boys brightened at this, and eagerly looked at their grandmother, who observed, ' We shall see about all those things next week ; to-morrow is a day of rest both for body and mind. Where is your place of worship ?'

' Our parish church is three streets off.'

When they retired for the night, Helen remarked that poor Sarah had interested her greatly ; but that she seemed to have no idea of religion, which she thought very strange ; for surely if the clergyman was at all like Mr. Barlow, he would visit and instruct one so afflicted, and with a short time to live.

' Alas, my child,' said the widow, ' this place is so thickly peopled, that I fear the clergy cannot visit half their people *unless* they be sent for : and from what I

have seen and heard in this house, such visitors would scarcely be over-welcome.'

'The boys say they will lie in bed till noon to-morrow, and then go to play in some fields near the town.'

'Then, Helen, we must all endeavor to show them how Christians ought to spend the Sabbath-day. May we have grace to be faithful! It is not easy to flesh and blood, when placed among scorers, to persevere, even outwardly, in a right path; but we shall receive all needful help from him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not.'

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'Do you know him, Sarah ; do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and as your own Saviour from Sin and its everlasting punishment ?' asked the widow.

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certificate of Mary's actual age to the surgeon, who, half smiling, proceeded to fill up the forms that left both her and her brother under the nominal protection afforded to children; for the legislature, by its latest act on the subject, recognizes as young men and women all who have completed their thirteenth year, and assigns to them the labor suited to adults!

The surgeon was bowed out by Mr. M., who proceeded with no very gracious looks to make the entries. Meanwhile the widow's heart smote her with painful self-reproach. She regarded the sickly boy as wholly unfit for even the light tasks that she had been assured would be assigned to him; and resolving to make any sacrifice rather than injure him, she requested the agent to postpone the insertion of his name for a while.

'Nonsense, nonsense, my good lady. He will be rated at nine years old, and worked accordingly; and paid accordingly, too, thanks to your register, and the doctor's conscience,' he added, with a sneering laugh.

But she still objected. In vain did the gentleman remonstrate, and in vain did he argue, except that the boy himself became anxious to undertake what was represented as being rather a pastime than a task; the widow remained inflexible; and the agent, after entering Helen and Mary, closed the book with an air of displeasure: then sternly told them to be at their posts by six o'clock on the Monday morning. He refused to listen to Mrs. Green's queries as to the nature and duration of their employment, which he said she might make out among her acquaintance, adding that they need not stay there any longer. With a glow on her aged cheek, the widow led her companions to the door, secretly congratulating herself that she had not been beguiled into a more permanent engagement for the two girls.

When Mrs. Wright heard that not only Willy but James was exempted from the agreement, she lacked words to express her astonishment and regret.

*'To be sure, this boy's cheeks are not so red as the*

others, and he isn't so overgrown as Mary; but if all that are not stronger or stouter than he were taken from work, a precious town of young idlers it would be, and the mills might stop at once.'

'I don't wish to be an idler, aunt,' said the boy, coloring.

'More shame for you if you did, and your grandmother that has tended you all your life long to have you thrown on her hands now, when she ought to be supported by you.'

The boy burst into tears. 'Granny,' said he, 'I *will* work, and nobody shall hinder me.'

'Be quiet, my dear child,' replied the widow soothingly; then, turning to her daughter, she said, with considerable earnestness, 'Sally, I shall be always glad to talk over your family concerns with you at proper times, and to have your advice; but I must not be dictated to in what concerns these children; particularly in their presence.'

'Oh, to be sure?' said the other, as she violently swung a pot from over the fire; 'William's children must be gentlefolks anywhere; and their poor relations, that live by the hard labor of themselves and their little ones, may be proud of the honor of serving them.'

This unfeeling reproach sank deep into the hearts it was intended to wound; but no reply was given. After a short pause the widow inquired about the schools, and was sullenly informed that there were plenty, from among which she could make her choice.

'And the Sunday school?'

'Wright can tell you about that; but it's little use, for they will be too tired to go there.'

'I am not tired a bit,' said Mary.

'Tell me that this day fortnight,' retorted her aunt, with a significant look.

Dinner being dispatched, the widow announced her intention of seeking a lodging to which they might remove on the Monday: Mrs. Wright offered some faint

opposition, protesting they were quite welcome to the best she had to give : but her mother pleaded the advantage of settling at once ; and having been told where to look for a respectable abode, she again sallied forth with her little band.

It was market day : but the busiest hour of traffic being past, the country people were leaving the town, and our villagers had opportunity to contemplate the lower orders of the inhabitants now perambulating the streets, to pick up at reduced prices the refuse of the market and shops. Great as was the contrast between the dense smoky atmosphere of these narrow, gloomy, filthy streets, and the pure sea-breeze of their own sweet native village, it was less painful than that which marked the population. Health, cleanliness and good humor, seemed almost equally banished from among them. Of bold, noisy mirth, drunken songs, and rude, coarse jesting there was indeed no scarcity : the poor strangers often shrank back in terror from the sounds they heard and the sights they beheld, but not even little Willy was tempted to smile by anything about him. Groups of children there were, and far more numerous than might have been expected, considering the factories were all full ; but they seemed nearly divisible into two classes—incorrigible, reckless idlers, and poor, enervated sickly objects, who had crawled forth from the surrounding abodes of poverty to mingle with them. Still hoping to reach a quarter where beer-houses and gin-shops should be fewer, and comparative respectability more apparent, the widow passed on ; but she found herself receding too far from the mill of the Messrs. Z., and the day fast closing too. She therefore fixed upon a small tenement, the occupier of which was a decent old man, who offered the accommodation of two apartments, such as she required ; and having exchanged references, she secured the rooms for a week ; resolving to make no more permanent engagement without sufficient deliberation. Alas ! the poor widow little knew



how total a sacrifice of her independence she had already made.

It was now getting late ; the street-lamps were lighted, and before they set out on their return, the factories had poured forth their thousands of laborers, from the puny infant of six or seven years, to the grey-headed man whose broken-down aspect proclaimed him as unfit for toil as they. It was a spectacle of interest and wonder to the young Greens to behold such a rush of children coming from or hastening towards every point of the compass. Some shouting as they bounded along, in mischief or in sport pushing their quieter companions from the path, but the greater number evidently feeble from exhaustion, jaded and ill-tempered, and frequently resenting, in expressions of fearful impiety, the annoyances of their more lively comrades. The widow shuddered as this occurred within her hearing, but still more were her feelings harrowed, when an involuntary pressure of her arm, which rested in Helen's, induced her to follow the direction of the girl's agitated look, and she beheld several mere children emerging from the doors of a gin-shop, flushed with the liquid flame which they had been swallowing. She hurried her young party onwards: secretly resolving that unattended they should never stir through those polluting scenes ; and clung to the arm of her sympathizing supporter, with sensations of mingled thankfulness, pity, and self-reproach ; for Helen, to whom alone she now looked for solace and for aid, was of years so tender, of mind so innocent, and disposition so retiring, that she needed for herself the guardianship that others must seek at her hands.

Bewildered and heart-sickened, she reached her daughter's abode ; and, on entering, heard a faint, querulous voice, exclaiming, ' Hav'n't I suffered enough, without being turned out of your company for my misfortunes ?'

' Let her stay, mother,' added Charles ; ' they're



nailed now fast enough ; and what signifies their seeing her ?

Thus prepared, the strangers exhibited no surprise at the addition made to the party within. The girl who occupied a low chair near the chimney corner, appeared to be naturally much taller than Phœbe, but was so twisted and crooked that she scarcely reached her height. Every feature betokened consumption far advanced ; and her large, glassy grey eyes seemed to rove about in quest of some object to interest them ; while an expression of melancholy discontent showed how vain was the search. A large shawl pinned close round the throat fell over her shoulders and body ; and she was evidently helpless as an infant.

The widow, merely asking, ‘ Is this my grand-daughter Sarah ? ’ imprinted an affectionate kiss on the pale cheek that was raised to receive it ; and the girl’s faint smile went more to her heart than anything she had yet met under that roof.

‘ Grandmother,’ said she, ‘ I am quite glad to see you : are those my cousins ? ’ They all surrounded her immediately, and each had something kind to say. Helen approached last, and gently telling her that though not a cousin she hoped she might be owned as a friend, saluted the poor girl, who, fixing her full eyes on her face, abruptly said, ‘ I like you very much, Helen Fleetwood.’

Mrs. Wright seemed rather puzzled by this scene : she understood not the feeling awakened in the generous minds of her guests by a spectacle that she expected would have excited their disgust ; for it was already apparent to all, that poor Sarah had only one arm, and that one so contracted as to be nearly useless ; while her feet were bent in, until she rested on the ankle-bones. ‘ You see,’ said her mother, ‘ what an object she is. The arm was lost by an accident, and all the rest came from convulsions and fits.’

‘ *Don’t be frightened,*’ said Charles, who saw the chil-

dren shrink back at the last words. 'She has no fits now, poor thing !' and he looked at her with an expression of tenderness which his countenance had hardly seemed capable of assuming.

When Wright came in, he answered all inquiries respecting the Sunday school nearly to the widow's satisfaction. He said the teachers were chiefly taken from among the adult working-people ; and that there was plenty of the Bible. Respecting the day-schools, he told her that the children must produce every Monday a voucher from some master or mistress of having attended their school for two hours each day on any six days out of the week : but he added, that there were ways of managing that without being over-punctual. His wife interrupted him : ' Oh, you need not talk of that : mother's conscience is too particular. Here are these two boys going to be gentlemen at large, because one is weakly for his age, and the other wants a few weeks of being nine !'

' You won't be able to afford that, mother,' said Wright, shaking his head ; ' you must get the little fellow into a silk-mill, where age is no objection, and the hours are shorter.'

Both the boys brightened at this, and eagerly looked at their grandmother, who observed, ' We shall see about all those things next week ; to-morrow is a day of rest both for body and mind. Where is your place of worship ?'

' Our parish church is three streets off.'

When they retired for the night, Helen remarked that poor Sarah had interested her greatly ; but that she seemed to have no idea of religion, which she thought very strange ; for surely if the clergyman was at all like Mr. Barlow, he would visit and instruct one so afflicted, and with a short time to live.

' Alas, my child,' said the widow, ' this place is so thickly peopled, that I fear the clergy cannot visit half their people *unless* they be sent for : and from what

have seen and heard in this house, such visitors would scarcely be over-welcome.'

'The boys say they will lie in bed till noon to-morrow, and then go to play in some fields near the town.'

'Then, Helen, we must all endeavor to show them how Christians ought to spend the Sabbath-day. May we have grace to be faithful! It is not easy to flesh and blood, when placed among scorers, to persevere, even outwardly, in a right path; but we shall receive all needful help from him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not.'

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rate; and as for that poor girl, she has enough to bear without being made a gloomy Methodist into the bargain. Come along, Johnny—better lose one's dinner than get such sauce to it.' He dashed down his book, seized his unwilling brother by the arm, and left the house.

'Oh pray, pray don't be angry!' sobbed Sarah, who seemed to feel the insult to her aged relative as much as the young Greens evidently did.

'I am not angry, my love, not at all,' said the widow, wiping the tears from the helpless girl's face. 'Poor Charles is quite mistaken, or he would not speak so. We must pray for him.'

'I never pray,' observed the girl.

'But you must.'

'I don't know how, grandmother; I never learned.'

'There's another of your lies,' remarked Phœbe, 'you went to church often enough.'

'Yes; but that's long ago, and I don't remember the prayers; so how should I pray?'

'Leave your nonsense,' said her mother, sharply, 'and don't keep your friends from taking off their bonnets.'

Upon this hint the visitors retired to their room, where they heard involuntarily the united scoldings of mother and sister, with a sob from Sarah between the pauses. She was evidently too weak to cope with anything so agitating, and the widow trembled lest it should induce a return of the fits. She kneeled down, with her little party around her, and in a low voice commended to the mercies of God in Christ Jesus the poor wounded, straying lamb that she ardently longed to gather into his fold.

The two boys did not come back; and after a gloomy meal, Phœbe went out also. On their return from afternoon service the widow engaged in a conversation with her son-in-law, her daughter, and two neighbors who dropped in, which, while she strove to make it subservient to their spiritual good, gave her an unexpected and startling insight into some details of the FACTORY SYSTEM, which we must reserve for another chapter.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A SCENE.

‘So, you have come among us, ma’am, to try the comforts of the factory?’ said one of the neighbors to the widow Green.

‘I have come to seek employment for these children, and for myself also; but more in the hope of gaining an honest livelihood than of finding greater comfort than we enjoyed in the country.’

‘The country!’ ejaculated the other, a man of most cadaverous and care-worn aspect. ‘Why a breath of air, and a day’s liberty, such as a pig-driver gets, is worth all that the best of us know in this vile town.’

‘But to those who are willing to work, such a market for their labor is a great advantage.’

‘Them that are most willing to work are not always the most able,’ returned the man: ‘and to my mind it’s a cannibal sort of life to be eating, as one may say, the flesh off our children’s bones, and sucking the young blood out of their veins.’

‘Hold your tongue, Tom South,’ said Mrs. Wright, angrily. ‘What business have you to talk so, having four children in the mills every day?’

‘Yes, and three in the untimely grave, where you, neighbor, have five, besides the poor maimed thing yonder—and all through those murdering mills.’

‘You are a discontented man, South,’ said the other visitor, a decent looking woman, ‘but certainly you’ve had *cause to complain*.’

‘Ay, hav’n’t I, Mrs. Johnson? I entered my younger children on the faith of these new acts, with their fine promises about schooling, short hours, inspectors, and all that. Bad as matters went, they told me it was because the act hadn’t time yet to work—all was soon to be fair and right; and so I neglected an opportunity of taking my poor family back to the blessed country labor, and here we may all die in ignorance and sin, as we live.’

Alarmed as the widow was by the former part of this speech, the conclusion called forth a stronger feeling, and she said, ‘Oh, don’t fancy that the mercy of Him who alone can remove ignorance from the mind and wash away sin from the soul is confined to any place. The cry of want and penitence will reach Him as soon from the lanes of a town like this as from the village green.’

‘I don’t deny it, my good lady; but people who would become fit company for angels must begin by getting out of the way of devils.’

‘Meaning your neighbors, I suppose?’ said Mrs. Wright, crimson with anger.

‘He doesn’t mean that,’ interposed the other woman: ‘he is talking of the mills, and the wickedness that his poor children are learning there.’

‘They hav’n’t much to learn, I’ll be bound,’ retorted Mrs. Wright.

‘Ah, that’s too true,’ exclaimed South. ‘They are going to ruin as fast as they can drive.’

‘Notwithstanding your good example.’

‘Dont scoff at me, neighbor Wright. I know my example is none of the best: but if I see myself to be in a bad way, is that any reason I should not wish my children in a better? With my bed-ridden old mother, and wife in a galloping consumption, and myself hardly up to the little work I can get, and not a hand’s turn at any other business for them, I can’t take them out of employ. What can I do?’

‘Do you send them regularly to the school?’ asked Mrs. Green.



‘What school? This act mocks us with an order that every child should go to school twelve hours in the week, and have a ticket for it; but when it comes to the pass, how do they manage? Why they give them an hour’s leave or so at such times as no school is open, or else where there’s only schools within reach where the masters and mistresses won’t receive the little dirty wretches, covered with the filth of the mills, among their children. Then to make out the twelve hours, they tell them to go to school on Sunday morning, afternoon and night; as if the poor creatures did not want a day’s rest, to say nothing of play: of course they won’t go.’

‘But how do they get vouchers?’

‘They forge them fast enough, but in a great many mills they are allowed to slip in without any, and the owners that have a conscience above that, turn off the young hands, rather than that the work should be stopped. Then the children must go to the silk-mills, where they are taken in at any age, and worked to death.’

‘Can all this be possible?’ asked the widow.

‘It can’t be denied,’ said Mrs. Johnson, shaking her head.

‘But surely the inspectors must discover such deceptions as to the schools, and punish them?’

‘The inspector comes once a year, and is bound to advertise his coming in the newspapers; so they take care to have all right just then. But if a complaint is made, and proved too, this fine law allows the father or brother of the offender to try the cause, and gives him power to dismiss it, if he likes. I’ll tell you what: within the memory of that girl, the law made the lowest penalty for working overhours, or for other such offence that was proved against a mill-owner, ten pounds, and forbade a near relation to try it: but now, as I told you, the worst case may be let off for half a crown, or set free, as the magistrate likes. So much for our rights, and the redress of our wrongs!’

The widow felt confounded: she looked at the children;

and then at her daughter ; but spoke not. South, with the readiness that we all feel to expatiate on ills when a fellow-sufferer is present, resumed :

‘ Then, in the case of ill-usage, you see the master usually contrives to shift the blame from himself to the managers or overlookers, or spinners : *he* don’t order the children to be beat ; *he* don’t see them beaten ; and so he gets off, and the poor things have no real protection anywhere.’

By this time the three little Greens had drawn near the speaker, and were gazing in his face with looks of bewildered alarm : he observed it.

‘ Ah, God help ye, poor dears ! Little pleasure will you have, except in the ways of sin.’

‘ I’m not going into the mills,’ said Willy ; ‘ but Mary is. Will Mary be beat ?’ and his lips began to quiver.

‘ Never fear,’ said Mary, stoutly ; ‘ neither master nor man shall beat me : and as for sin, I won’t go into any sinful company.’

‘ You can’t keep out of it, my poor child.’

‘ If it is in the way of duty, sir,’ said Helen, modestly, ‘ and we pray to the Lord to watch over us, and enable us to watch also, we shall be kept from evil ways, though we may be forced to have evil companions.’

Mrs. Wright tossed her head with a very scornful sneer. South looked at the two girls alternately, and muttered, ‘ Two more lambs for the shambles.’

‘ Come, come, neighbor,’ said Mrs. Johnson, ‘ you are too disheartening, quite. To be sure, not one girl in fifty keeps her character clean ; and to be sure there isn’t a small tradesman’s wife would not think herself disgraced to take a factory girl for a servant ; but what so many do doesn’t look as bad as if only a few did it. I have seen some that turned out decently after all. My nephew married one, and she did very well.’

‘ Yes,’ returned South, ‘ and died at the birth of her first child, as everybody said she would !’

‘ The worst thing,’ proceeded Mrs. Johnson, whose

objection to discouragements was not very consistent, 'the worst thing is the accidents. You must think of poor Sarah there, and take care of the machines.'

'What machines?'

'Everything is done by machinery; you see, they are great things, ever so high and big, all going about and about, some on wheels running up and down the room, and some with great rollers turning about as fast as the steam can drive them; so you must step back, and run forward, and duck, and turn, and move as they do, or off goes a finger or an arm, or else you get a knock on the head, to remember all your lives. As to sitting down, there's no such thing.'

'No sitting down!' cried all the villagers in a breath.

'No, no,' responded Sarah, in a melancholy tone, 'no sitting down.'

'Ah, poor soul!' said South, 'it was standing and standing all day long that makes you unable to stand for the rest of your life.'

At this juncture Wright entered, and looked with some surprise at the party. 'Why you seem as if you had just run away from an earthquake, good people.'

'Pshaw!' replied his wife, 'it's only South at his old pranks of making out grievances to frighten my mother about her tender chicks.'

'And our good mother of course takes it all for gospel,' returned Wright, forcing a smile.

'No, not gospel at any rate,' said Mary: 'for there is no good news in it, uncle.'

'Gospel means truth, my dear.'

'The gospel is truth, uncle: but the word means "good news."'

Mrs. Wright sharply remarked, 'You need not set up, Miss Green, to teach your elders and betters: this comes of filling young heads with conceit.'

Mary was ready with a reply, but the widow interposed. 'I should be sorry, Sarah, to hear a child presuming to teach; but in this case Mary only answered

her uncle according to the sense of the word, without knowing he used it with any other meaning. It is indeed good news, and the blessed certainty that is also truth, unfailing truth, is what makes it better than the best of news. God grant us all to receive it, not only into our minds by hearing, but into our hearts by faith !

‘Grandmother,’ said Sarah, ‘what is the news that you call so good?’

Before the old lady could reply, Mrs. Wright turned fiercely upon the girl, and exclaimed in her loudest tone of anger, ‘If you dare to meddle or make with any of these canting tricks, I’ll bundle you out of doors, to crawl through the streets, and beg your way.’

‘Will you so, mistress mine?’ exclaimed her husband, in a tone no less angry than her own: ‘you should bundle out yourself first, I promise you.’

A violent altercation ensued, in which South acted as pacificator, on grounds of propriety and respectability, while Mrs. Johnson poured oil on the flame, in her endeavors to quench it. Several times the widow attempted to speak, but in vain: and Helen, seeing poor Sarah trembling greatly, went over to soothe her. This turned the mother’s ire upon her, ‘Stand off!’ she vociferated. ‘None of your hypocritical ways here. You wheedled yourself in, to eat the bread of my poor brother’s orphans, beggar as you are! But you shan’t interfere in my house, I promise you.’

All reply to this savage speech was precluded by Sarah falling from her seat in convulsions. The widow told Helen to take the frightened children into their room, and then with an energy that would not be repressed, while the two men raised and supported the struggling sufferer, she exclaimed, ‘Daughter, as you value a mother’s blessing, desist from this violence. Your enmity against the gospel, the Spirit of God can alone remove: but I have a right to interfere between your evil passions and the children under my care: and oh,’ *she added, as the blackening face of the girl gave evi-*



dence of the danger she was now in, 'is it not enough to see your own child sinking into an early grave, but will you stand between the Saviour and the soul that he died to redeem !'

The entrance of the two boys now increased the confusion. Charles had evidently been drinking to a pitch of excitement, and Johnny looked more alert than he had yet done. The elder, who loved no living thing but Sarah, and was really fond of her, no sooner beheld her condition than he rushed forward, and demanded what they had been doing to his sister.

'Tis your mother's work,' answered Wright ; and the young madman instantly seized a heavy missile which he would have flung at her, had not Mrs. Johnson caught his arm, and South, leaving his hold of Sarah, wrested it from him. A short struggle enabled the man to confine so weak a creature, and he proceeded to take the only vengeance within his reach, by uttering a volley of dreadful imprecations and threats directed against his mother.

'Hold your tongue, you fool,' said Wright, 'the girl is coming to ; and you'll frighten her off again.

'Here, lend a hand, and speak coaxingly to her : she'll mind you best.' He winked to South, who, seeing the effect of these words, released his captive, and the boy's whole attention was immediately directed to his sister. Supporting her head on his shoulder, he whispered the kindest encouragements he could think of : only darting now and then a ferocious glance at his mother, who stood in sullen silence, apparently unmoved by a scene that dreadfully appalled the widow, and alarmed even the neighbors, to whom, alas ! it was not new. South, seeing the danger pretty well over, drew the old lady aside, and said in a low voice, 'Now, ma'am, as they wished you to think I was making worse of the matter than I need do, just judge for yourself by what you see before you. There's your daughter, as nice and respectable a young woman as ever came among us, turned into a stone, as I may say, towards her own children, by hardening

her heart to their sufferings, that she might live on their toil and ruin. There's her husband, a quiet good-natured man, doating on his children, but forced to wink at what frets his very life; and only interfering when anything so bad as this happens. There's the cripple, her legs useless by the over-fatigue of always standing at the frames, her arm gone, by being caught in the machinery, and she in a decline from fits brought on by her sufferings. Her sister——least said is soonest mended: only I can pretty well guess what sort of company she is in al' this time. That boy is a devil incarnate; drinks, and swears, and cheats, and seems to hate all good for the sake of hating it. The little fellow he is leading in the same way; and it's a mercy for the others that they died young. A short life, and a sad one they had; poor things, they are gone to heaven to be rewarded for it all. And now, Mrs. Green, have I said more than your own eyes can see to be the truth?'

The widow could make no reply: her heart was overwhelmed with terror and distress. Meanwhile Sarah seemed to be entreating her brother, who after some objection whispered to his father, and he returned an answer, accompanied by a half-smile, which drew a grin upon Charles' countenance. The boy then resolutely exclaimed, 'Grandmother, poor Sarah was so pleased with the singing this morning, she wants to hear more of it——nothing else will serve her now. Please to call Miss Helen and the young 'uns, and let's have a devout Psalm.'

The widow hesitated, and looked in the flushed scowling face of her daughter: but Charles reiterated the request in a more peremptory tone, and Sarah, in reply to her query, said she wished it very much. She therefore summoned the children and Helen, whose pale looks bore witness to their past alarm, and Charles, who seemed delighted thus to annoy his mother, ranged them before Sarah, whom he still supported. 'What shall we sing?' asked Mary: Helen whispered a reply; and they immediately began, in the softest tones of their sweet voices,

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

For some time Charles kept his eyes on his sister's face, smiling at her delight, which she expressed by most eloquent looks, and frequently pushing his arm, as if to keep his attention awake. As the singers proceeded, however, and Helen's voice in particular proved how deeply she entered into every word of that exquisite hymn, his eyes became riveted on them, his features lost their dark expression, and the power of sacred melody for a few moments triumphed over the evil spirit that troubled him.

'Sweet, sweet and beautiful cousins,' said Sarah, 'how I do love your faces and your songs.'

'We'll sing again, shall we?' said little Willy, 'and a ively hymn.'

Come let us join our cheerful songs.

When they had ended this, South, whose tears were starting, hoarsely said, 'Bless you, sweet dears; if ever innocence and a cotton-mill went together, may you be innocent still!'

Mrs. Wright, who either from policy or some other cause had assumed her wonted composure, gravely addressed the widow. 'It has struck me, mother, that as you don't send the little boys to the mill, you might turn a good penny out of them by letting them sing ballads in the street.'

'Or make an engagement at one of the small theatres,' added Mrs. Johnson, who seemed to take it quite seriously.

'Never mind their impertinence,' said Charles to the party he was now pleased to patronize, 'give us one more song.'

'Shall it be the evening hymn?' asked Helen.

'Not until we have read and prayed, my love,' replied the widow, hoping by this means to introduce the scripture and family worship, at least for once;—but the

words put all in motion. Mrs. Johnson, in a great bustle, turned to look at the clock, protesting she had no notion it was so late; and the rest took advantage of her rising to show in various ways their utter disinclination to any such procedure. The widow had hoped that South would second her proposal, but he was one of the many who see the disease, and loudly complain of its effects, and even talk of the only remedy, without desiring to know anything experimentally of its power. She had, therefore, no alternative but to join in the general good night, and to retire.

‘Granny,’ said the youngest boy, as he climbed on her knee, ‘this Sunday was not like our Sundays at home.’

‘Only while we were singing,’ remarked Mary; ‘and a great mercy that they let us; for cousin Charles was like a wild beast, and would have done somebody a mischief.’

‘Hush, Mary, you must not speak harshly of your poor cousin, but pray for him.’

‘Oh,’ exclaimed James, ‘I shall never bear the sight of him after the words he used to his mother. I heard them, and a great scuffle too; what were they doing?’

‘No harm was done, my dear. I was indeed shocked at what you speak of, but it is the grace of God alone that makes you to differ, so far as you do, from others who have not been so well instructed.’

‘So Helen told him,’ observed Mary, ‘when he got into a passion at Charles’s bad words. I wonder what Richard would have done if he heard anybody speak so to you, granny?’

‘Dear Richard!’ said the widow, glad to change the subject, ‘I trust this has been a day of peace and blessing to him.’

The children took up the theme, and went over the details of what they supposed to have been their brother’s employments through the Sabbath hours. This restored *their cheerfulness*; and they gratefully joined in those



exercises which had been rejected in the adjoining room. The evening hymn, chanted in a low tone, closed the day; and the children could not repress their satisfaction that they were to spend no more Sabbaths in that house.

‘Mind,’ said Mary, as she repaired to her little bed, ‘mind, Helen, you call me in good time, as if we were going to milk old Buckle’s cows.’

Helen forced a smile. ‘I will, Mary; and though the streets of M. are not much like our own sea-shore, the path of duty is always pleasant, for the Lord shines upon it.’

‘I think Helen has turned preacher,’ said Mary to herself, ‘I never heard her talk in this way before. I wonder if the mill people will mind her. If they don’t treat us with proper respect I shall make more dust among them than all the machines that old South talked of. Oh, it is all for want of a little proper spirit that the work-people are made slaves of. I can show them a better plan.’ And the poor child fell asleep to dream of conquering and reaved in an imaginary mill.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SETTING TO WORK.

LONG before morning had broke on the dull misty tow of M. the widow Green and her family arose to pray, preparatory to the departure of the two girls. Gladly would the aged woman have accompanied them to the innermost scene of their labors, but this, she had been assured, was out of the question. However, to send them alone through the streets was not to be thought of; and after seeing them swallow a few mouthfuls of bread, she took Helen's arm, grasped Mary by the hand, and closely followed by the two boys, who would not remain, softly quitted the house.

The air was frosty, and consequently to them more congenial than the foul, dank atmosphere that usually prevailed in those pent-up thoroughfares. It breathed comparative refreshment, and imparted some buoyancy to their spirits. Helen was entering on her future task with a clearer view of its probable evils than any other of the party had taken; but strengthened by a determination to do and to suffer uncomplainingly whatever might be before her. She had spoken truly her prevailing thought when reminding the widow of the cross that every Christian must needs bear, and of their past exemption from all deserving the name. She now realized the daily taking up of that cross, and her only solicitude was to be found following Christ under its burden. She would indeed have preferred any species of drudgery *among* the rural scenes that floated before her mind's

eye, with their endearing recollections, in all the heightened beauty of deep contrast ; but had the choice been her's she would not for one moment have entertained a thought of deserting the post of sacred duty beside her benefactress, for the sweetest delights of her own loved native hamlet. In all Helen's pictures of earthly happiness, that family ever occupied the foreground ; and an enjoyment unshared by them was a dream that never entered the affectionate girl's imagination.

Poor Mary, who intended to work such wonders in the factories by her unflinching resistance of all aggressive doings, did not feel quite so resolute under the chilling influence of a raw dark morning, as when, in her snug bed, she had watched the flickering candle that cast its ray on the page her grandmother was studying. Gladly would she have been spared the trial that now drew near ; but no outward sign of such misgivings was apparent. On the contrary, she endeavored to trip with a gait as lively as when bounding along the eastern cliff towards old Buckle's shed ; but that was impossible. However, she bore up with a sprightly air, frequently turning to cheer her brothers with the promise of bringing home at night a full, true, and particular account of her expected adventures through the day.

At length they reached the mill, and there they found a pale, sleepy, little crowd, who, like themselves, were somewhat too early, shivering in the ungenial air. A large lamp was burning over the entrance-gate, and the morning's light had begun to throw a doubtful streak across the sky, blending with its sickly glare. Many curious eyes examined the strangers, and some questions were directed to Mary, whose communicative looks invited them. ' You are too smart,' said a little girl, surveying her dress ; ' I doubt your fine clothes wont hold long.'

' Fine cloths !' responded Mary, in astonishment. ' I never wore fine clothes in my life ; and this is my common milking-dress.'

‘It’s too good for the mill,’ rejoined the other; and the bystanders confirmed her assertion, both by their words and appearance. Mary stoutly maintained her ground. ‘Neatness and cleanliness are never out of place,’ she said; ‘they make the poorest child look respectable; and so my granny has often told me.’

A burst of rude laughter followed this speech, and the voice of a grown lad exclaimed, ‘You’ll soon forget your granny’s sayings, and learn things more to the purpose, my fine little madam.’

The next moment the gate was thrown open, and a sort of rush ensued, in the midst of which the Wrights were seen elbowing their way. Phœbe cast a glance of disdain on her relations as she passed, and took no farther notice. John nodded; but Charles, after apparently overlooking them, and hurrying on, stole back, as if more than half reluctant to have anything to do with them, and in a hesitating manner said, ‘I promised Sarah to see you in; so come along, for I can’t stop a minute.’

At the door, the widow was told that she must go no further, unless she had work in the mill: and so great was the press just then, that she scarcely knew how the girls had been disengaged from her retentive grasp, and borne inward by the living tide, while she, with the boys, was obliged to turn back. Leaving to Mary’s recital the adventures of the former, we will accompany the latter to their apartment at Wright’s, where they hastened to pour forth in earnest prayers the solicitude of their hearts for objects so dear to them, launched on a scene of which they only knew enough to render them more anxiously curious as to its details. The widow felt so many misgivings, that she clung more closely to the assurance of being able to withdraw her children whenever she pleased; and already she was secretly weighing the respective merits of different plans, supposing this to fail, as she could not but fear that it would. The dress, language, demeanor of the young people *whom she had seen at the mill-gate*, was anything but



prepossessing: and the multitude of men and women, but chiefly men, whom she remarked repairing to the different factories, were very unlike what her fancy had pictured of an industrious, thriving population. She had lived too long, and seen too much of human nature, to expect the absence of vice and misery in any class, more especially among the lower orders densely peopling a large town: but that ensnaring pamphlet, with the glowing representations of Mr. Stratton and his friend, had spread a coloring over this particular scene not so easily dispelled, even when the naked reality began to force itself on her unwilling perception, confirming the purport of South's remarks, which she would fain have referred to the promptings of a discontented mind.

After a dull breakfast, the two little boys went to talk to Sarah, who was not well enough to leave her bed; and Mrs. Green at once commenced an earnest and serious, though affectionate, remonstrance with her daughter, on the evident neglect of parental duties, which could only issue in the ruin of her children. The representation was silently heard to its closing appeal, which referred to the different line of conduct pursued by the speaker towards her own family when young. 'I know that very well, mother,' answered the other, somewhat softened; 'and I'm sure no children ever had kinder or better parents than we; but a country life makes things come easy enough that one can't think of doing in a town.'

'If you mean those things that I have alluded to, scriptural teaching, prayer, and watchfulness over the young; surely they are rendered even more necessary where temptations abound, as they plainly do here.'

'Ay, but you can't keep your eye on the children, as you do in the country.'

'Supposing it to be so, Sally, ought not that to make you more diligent in teaching them to remember that the eye of God is never withdrawn—that he is ever about their path, and spieth out all their ways: and

that no darkness can cover them from his piercing sight ?'

'It would not be enough that I chose to teach, if they didn't choose to learn.'

The widow felt that she who uttered this remark was a living illustration of its truth : however, she persevered. 'You, my daughter, have one part to perform, they another. God requires of you to point out to your children the way they should go : and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, you are bound to tell them their duty.'

Mrs. Wright grew impatient ; she began to fidget, to look at the clock, and to mutter inaudibly : her mother resumed. 'My dear child, I will not detain you long ; I am about to remove from your house, and our future meetings may not be so frequent as I wish. Only give me this satisfaction before I leave you : promise that you will ask help from above in the very difficult work you have too long neglected, of directing and guiding those poor young people.'

'What's the good of asking for what I could not use if I had it ?' she said, peevishly.

'He who gives the help will also enable you to use it.'

'Mother, it's all folly to begin now. I have such a set to deal with, that you might as easily turn this old table into gold as alter them for the better. You saw the way that undutiful fellow treated me yesterday.'

'It was a dreadful scene : but had you commended him and yourself to the divine care for the day ? Oh, Sally, had you honored the Sabbath in God's house and your own, and as far as in you lay, constrained your family to do the same, Satan would never have obtained such an advantage here.'

Mrs. Wright now became irritated : 'I'll tell you my mind fairly, mother ; bad as it was, I'd rather have it so than make my house the gloomy place you would wish *it to be*—filled with long faces, and dismal voices, drawl-

ing out melancholy psalms, and texts, and prayers all day long : breaking down the natural spirits of the children.'

Just then, a sound issued from the other room, of two merry voices carolling a lively rural ditty, accompanied by Sarah's laugh. The widow, considering this the best answer to her daughter's coarse and unjust remarks, remained silent.

'Well, mother, I'm sure you mean it all kindly,' said Mrs. Wright, returning from the cupboard, to which she had gone in some haste, 'but stay a few weeks, and you'll understand the difference better than you do now.'

'I cannot understand better than I do now that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of the things done in the body. Oh that I could persuade you, my poor Sally, to taste and see how gracious the Lord is to those who call upon him—how pleasant is that service which you account hard and severe : and what great gain there is in the godliness which you despise.'

'Mind me now, mother : if you don't make something of those boys, by setting them to work, all the gains of your godliness won't keep you long from beggary.'

'I intend them to work, because idleness is sinful and dangerous : and because we are bound to seek God's help in the way of honest industry, not that of slothful expectation ; but I will not place them in a factory yet.'

'Do as you please : you'll find you must.'

The widow now went to take leave of the poor girl, whom she found looking much more animated, and who welcomed her most eagerly.

'Dear granny, I am sorry and not sorry for your going away. I cannot bear to part with you all : but you will be more comfortable in a place of your own.'

'We will often come to see you, my dear : and now tell me, Sarah, do you know who has afflicted you thus ?'

‘It was partly done by the machine, ma’am, and partly by the overlooker that used to strap me and kick me, when I used to get too tired to work.’

A chill crept over the widow as she thought of her dear children; but she went on: ‘That was not my meaning, my love: who do you think has ordered these afflictions for you?’

Sarah remained silent, looking perplexed. Willy said, in a soft tone, ‘It was God, cousin.’

‘I don’t believe it was,’ she quickly answered, turning her full eyes upon him.

‘Why not?’ said James.

‘Because Helen Fleetwood told me that God is very good; and I don’t think he would order me to be hurt in this way?’

The two boys looked at their grandmother, who, greatly affected, said, ‘My dear child, God’s mercies often come to us in a very strange shape; and I trust you will yet find that even these hurts were ordered by his great goodness, for your everlasting benefit.’

‘Hush!’ said the girl, glancing to the door, where her mother now appeared to ask whether a neighbor, who had a leisure hour, should assist in removing the luggage: the offer was gladly accepted, and in another hour the party had entered their new abode.

The table was scarcely spread for dinner before Helen and Mary hastened in, their clothes already somewhat the worse for a few hours wear in a mill, but with fresh color, smiling faces, and excellent appetites. ‘Oh, how nice,’ cried Mary, ‘to have a home of one’s own again: and how neat you have made it look!’ She was soon assailed with questions, to which she replied, that she liked the mill greatly, but would not begin her story then, as they had only a quarter of an hour, some cleaning being required before they went to work again. Accordingly dinner was soon dispatched, and away they ran, with an alacrity that dissipated much of the widow’s *uneasiness*.



In the evening, Mary commenced her promised recital. 'When Charles Wright hurried us away from you, granny, I was so dizzy with the crowd about us that I hardly knew how we managed. He behaved civilly, for him, and took us to a man and said something: and the man bade us come along with him. So Charles left us, and we went on, and all I could make out was that I should be a piecener.'

'What is a piecener?' said James

'Oh, you'll hear presently. Well, after going through a good many places that I could make little out of, it was so dark, and we walked so fast, we came to a room, and the man put me in there, and went off with Helen, before I knew what I was about, and what a sight I saw? Nothing ever frightened me so much.'

'Why, you said nobody should frighten you in the mills,' remarked Willy.

'Nobody did frighten me, though the man that took me from the other, looked as cross and spoke as gruff as old Buckle; but only think, boys, what it must be to see ever so many great big things, frames upon carriages on each side of the room, walking up to one another, and then walking back again, with a huge wheel at the end of each, and a big man turning it with all his might, and a lot of children of all sizes keeping before the frame, going backwards and forwards, piecening and scavenging, why, we all stared yesterday, when that Mr. South said there was no sitting down; but nobody would even think of it. Move, move, everything moves. The wheels and the frames are always going, and the little reels twirl round as fast as ever they can; and the pulleys, and chains, and great iron works over-head, are all moving; and the cotton moves so fast that it is hard to piece it quick enough; and there is a great dust, and such a noise of whirr, whirr, whirr, that at first I did not know whether I was not standing on my head.'

'How funny!' said James, laughing, 'but what was your work like?'

‘Why, you see, the frame goes sloping up so, and the bottom edge is not so high as this little table: and the upper edge has got two rows of little rollers, and over them several other rows that stand up; and there are a great many cotton threads reaching from the bottom to the top of the frame; and while the machine moves about, the threads go running up, and twist around the little rollers above. Now the threads being thin and fine, they often break, and I have to keep a great watch, to get hold of the two ends when one breaks, and put them together, the same as in spinning.’

‘It is spinning,’ said Helen.

‘Yes, it is; but not a bit like Mrs. Barker’s wheel and distaff, with only one thread to mind. The man at the wheel is the spinner, and when the frame comes up the room he has to set his hand against it and push it back, which is pretty hard work. The joining, or piecening, is easy enough when you get used to it.’

‘And what is scavenging?’

‘Oh, that made me laugh. You see, bits of cotton wool will stick to the thread, and they mustn’t go on the reels; so there is a little girl huddled up under the frame and she snatches off all the loose wool, and throws it down so fast! and when the machine runs back, if the little scavenger did not bob and duck, and get very low, she would have a fine knock on the head.’

‘Poor thing!’ said Helen, ‘she can never stretch herself out, hardly; and she is almost choked and smothered in the dust of the light cotton bits that she has to pull and scatter about her.’

‘I did not think of that,’ replied Mary, ‘it amused me to see her so frightened and all in a bustle, so I laughed, and the spinner laughed to see me; and he is like old Buckle, not so cross as he looks.’

‘Did the scavenger laugh?’ asked James.

‘No; she seemed angry, and muttered: I am sorry I was so thoughtless, granny, I will not laugh any more at *her*.’

‘I hope not, my dear: all this is new to you, but you may find it very fatiguing before long; and then how would you like to be laughed at by others?’

‘Nobody shall laugh at me.’

‘You could not prevent it, Mary. Remember how often I have told you, that the choice of what we are to be and to suffer is not in our own hands. It becomes us all, at all times, to submit humbly to whatever God sees fit to lay upon us; and to help our companions to do the same.’

‘Yes, granny, I will always submit to God; but I need not let my fellow-creatures domineer over me.’

‘If the Lord makes them the means of afflicting us, Mary, it is to Him we submit. But we may not reason about it, since we have a positive command, “Submit yourselves one to another.” “Be clothed with humility.” “Resist not evil.” There are many more such passages in the Bible.’

Mary said nothing, but she looked unconvinced. Helen remarked, ‘There is no resisting in a mill, for nobody can stop the great wheels always kept going by the steam. My work is among much bigger machines than Mary’s, in the cording room, where the cotton is pulled out and prepared for the spinners.’

‘Do you walk about?’ asked Willy.

‘Yes, a good deal. There is plenty of bustling, and crowding, and hurrying, but the work does not seem very hard. Phœbe Wright is in the same room.’

‘Is she civil?’ Mary inquired.

‘I hope I shall do nothing to make her otherwise,’ answered Helen: and the widow felt that the question had been evaded. In fact Phœbe could not restrain for a single day her bad feelings against the girl whom she had scoffingly introduced among her new companions as a mighty great saint; who sang psalms by the way of payment for above a dozen years’ board, lodging, and clothing, which a silly old woman had given her at the expense of her own grandchildren, now forced to leave a

respectable home in the country, and work in the factories for bread. The first part of the information of course excited much laughter, the latter no less indignation; and poor Helen found herself at once marked out for the contempt and dislike of the people around her. She hoped it might wear off; but whatever ensued she resolved in the strength of the Lord to submit, and never to grieve her friends by communicating the trial to which their kinswoman had subjected her.

But as time wore on, this was more difficult than she had anticipated; for Helen Fleetwood, with all her advantages, was only a poor frail mortal, like others. Often did this determination of keeping her mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked was before her, cost a most severe struggle; often did the silence she was constrained to keep from good words fill her with pain and grief. When she had once or twice attempted to reason with her persecutors on scriptural grounds, and found that her remonstrances were received with shouts of derision, and her quotations from holy writ blasphemously parodied by a few who, being the worst, of course took the lead, she felt that in this instance the pearls were trampled under feet by beings ready to turn and rend her, and she forbore to inflame their bitter hostility. Yet her compassionate heart longed to repeat what might, she thought, be blessed to some poor children around her. The majority of her immediate companions were of her own and Phæbe's age, and seemingly hardened past all fear or shame; but some interesting and modest-looking little girls were mingled among them. Her greatest annoyance however by far, was from the boys, who were often set on to insult her in ways more trying than the rest. Still she endured, as seeing Him who is invisible; but when returning to her home, when meeting the affectionate smiles of its beloved and loving inmates, most galling was the restraint that withheld her from claiming their ready sympathy. It would have been so soothing to tell out her *sorrow to that maternal friend*, and to listen to the sim-



ple but sweet comforts that even the children could supply. James would have found many an apposite text in his Bible, and Willy have repeated or sang to her the hymns most suitable to such a case. But she saw the burden gradually increasing on her best earthly friend ; she discerned in Mary a growing spirit of discontent and disobedience ; and she resolved, instead of adding her calamities to the general stock, to take a double share of those which oppressed her benefactress.

One week was sufficient to develope thus far Helen's position in the mill. Mary's was worse, inasmuch as she wanted the wisdom and the strength that Helen derived from on high. Impetuosity, self-confidence and irritability, were the little girl's prevailing disadvantages ; her excessively open temper, and love of talk, rendered them evident to all about her, while her unsuspecting warmth of heart made it easy to win Mary's affection, and to impose on her credulity. A little flattering went far with her, if so administered as to suit her natural love of pre-eminence ; no child perhaps was harder to drive, but none more easily led. It may be supposed that such a character invited the various attacks of those who, amid the sameness of their disagreeable employment, were glad of anything to diversify the scene : of others, who felt nettled at what frequently assumed the appearance of a conscious superiority over themselves ; and of that numerous class whose inherent love of mischief, or desire to reduce all to their own low level of morality, induced them to assail a new comer with temptations, mocks, or malicious ill-offices, just as occasion or their own caprice might prompt. To say that all her companions belonged to one or another of these descriptions would be saying too much ; but whatever good heaven there might be in the lump, was hidden beneath the abounding evil, and worked unseen, as to any influence upon the mass.

The widow, as yet, saw nothing of all this : Helen's *griefs were carefully hidden*, and as the ground which

little Mary had at present taken up was that of a very rare and perfect example among her comrades, she sustained the character at home with some success: but the old lady was beginning to see that a life of idleness would prove equally injurious to her boys with one of more general exposure: already they had made some unsuitable acquaintance in the street, for she could not cage them like birds in a narrow apartment—and by sundry pranks within doors had added force to the landlord's remarks on the folly of keeping them 'like born gentlemen, with nothing to do. 'Tis no concern of mine, mistress,' he added, 'but you seem such a respectable, industrious body yourself, and too sensible for any silly pride, that I do wonder you can't see the mischief of spoiling the lads for life.'

'But I want to find some other way of living for them, rather than the mills; and if I don't, next week I shall send them to school.'

'Well, ma'am, you are the best judge; but you must pay pretty high for a school where they can learn more than they know now; and I can't see the use of going over the same things twice. Boys get as idle at school as anywhere else, when they've no more to learn. As for employment, if you have friends among the gentry, not being mill-owners, you may get them into some service: or with a good round sum, you can bind them to a trade. But, as I said, 'tis no business of mine; and as long as I get my rent, you're all heartily welcome under my roof.'

The last word sank deep; for the rent of such respectable places was high; and the widow had made some calculations that proved they must all, ere long, work for their daily subsistence. The Saturday afternoon brought in the earnings of the two girls; and she felt it was unjust to let them labor alone for the whole family. She, therefore, spoke to her landlord, who readily promised to obtain admission for Willy into a *silk-mill*; and pleased at what he considered a very sen-

sible use of the advice he had given, the old gentleman offered to procure a little work at some sort of simple manufacture, such as netting, for James to do at home, until she could make up her mind to engage him also. The Sabbath found them all most thankful to enjoy its privileges unmolested ; and poor Helen especially longed for the refuge of those courts of the Lord's house which were doubly and trebly endeared to her by the last few days' experience, and the too just anticipation of what was yet to come.

In the course of the week Mrs. Green had found a Sunday-school far superior to that which she had before seen, and a ministry better suited to her need. Of both these the party availed themselves, and had scarcely finished their comfortable meal, and entered upon the sweet subject of their village home and absent brother—when they were surprised by a tap at the door, followed by the entrance of Charles Wright, who civilly asked whether his coming was an interruption. 'The addition of another of my grand-children to our Sunday party must be a welcome one,' replied the widow, drawing a seat near her own for this unexpected guest ; who, after paying some compliments on the very neat and pretty abode, proceeded with no small embarrassment to open his commission.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A FURTHER INSIGHT.

‘FIRST, then, grandmother,’ said Charles, ‘mother is very sorry she hadn’t time to pay you a visit yet.’

‘I did not expect it, my dear : I knew it was a busy week with her as well as with me.’

‘All right :’ responded the lad, whose affectation of the man was rendered more uncouth by his appearance, and the strange contrast it formed to the real manliness of Richard, who never aspired to be more than a boy ; ‘All right ; but, ma’am, everybody is not so reasonable, and there’s poor Sarah fretting like a fool about it. Nothing will serve her but the fancy that we’ve all quarrelled, though we told her you were ill, and all sorts of lies, to pacify her.’

The Greens were horrified, and shrank back as this unprincipled declaration was made, evidently on purpose to shock them, but the widow’s steady gaze seemed to abash the young profligate, who hastily added, ‘We wanted to keep her from making herself ill ; but she set her heart upon sending a message to you, and getting an answer ; and so to save the ninny any farther moaning I came about it myself.’

All the party now looked complacently at their guest : James sidled up to him, and said, ‘I do like you for being so kind to poor Sarah.’

‘All very fine, my little gentleman-at-large,’ replied *the other*, with a patronizing stroke of the boy’s head.



‘But what is the message you have been so kind as to bring us?’ asked the widow.

‘Pon honor, I believe I’ve forgot it! Oh—ay—let’s see; ’tis precious nonsense I know. Ah, I remember now: why it seems you’d a kick-up last Sunday with old South concerning some word that you couldn’t agree about?—

‘It was gospel,’ interrupted Willy: ‘Mr. South said it meant truth, and we told him it meant good news.’

‘And granny proved that it was both,’ added James.

‘Bravo, bright memories!’ exclaimed Mr. Charles, theatrically, ‘there’s nothing like rustic genius. Well, grandmother, the poor girl’s fancy was tickled by this learned debate, and she wants you to send her word by me why this same gospel, whatever it may be, is good news.’

Painfully disgusting as was the studied, sneering levity of the boy, his message rejoiced them all. The widow began, in her most striking and affectionate manner, to give such a reply as she deemed suitable no less to his case than to Sarah’s; but after a minute he stopped her.

‘Oh, mercy, ma’am! surely you don’t expect my poor knowledge-box to hold all this, and to carry it safe through the streets all the way home without spilling! Make the answer as short as you can: anything will do for that simpleton.’

‘Charles,’ said the old lady, kindly but solemnly, ‘I cannot allow you thus to jest and trifle with a subject so awful—a subject no less important to you than it is to Sarah and to us. You have done a most brotherly thing in coming here on such an errand: do not spoil all by your unsuitable behavior.’

The boy colored with anger, and seemed about to rise; but did not. Suddenly recollecting himself, he said, ‘Come! do it your own way, and I’ll take down the heads:’ then producing a bit of pencil, he opened the cover of a dirty song-book, so as to display the many

offensive things that were already scrawled on it. The widow calmly closed the disgraceful volume, and laying upon it a piece of clean paper, said, 'Now, proceed to make your notes.'

Affecting to suppress a laugh, and putting on a face of mock gravity, he looked up for his instructions.

'We are all sinners,' commenced the widow, repressing, by a look which she had seldom worn, the jeer that seemed about to pass his lips: 'we have the eye of an all-seeing, all-holy God continually upon us; and every thought of our heart is known to him. Pride, falsehood, uncleanness, intemperance, wrath, envy, all these are terribly sinful: and so is every act, every word, every feeling, that is not according to the holy will of this just God.'

It was evident that Charles, though he scribbled away, was not taking it down faithfully: but he could not help hearing it, and with this she resolved to be content.

'The wages of sin is death: God has declared it; and that death is not the end of an existence, but an eternity of torment hereafter.

'Every one of us has sinned: every one lies under this condemnation.

'When we were thus helpless, thus condemned, God accepted a ransom for our guilty souls, even the precious blood of His only Son, who became man that he might suffer and die on the cross for our iniquities.

'This sacrifice is sufficient before God, to atone for all the sins of all the sinners upon earth, from the creation to the judgment-day: but it is only made effectual to them that believe, and come repentingly to ask it.

'We are so blinded and hardened by sin that we can neither believe nor understand, nor serve God, without the aid of the Holy Spirit: and this aid is given to all who for Christ's sake implore it.

'Christ having suffered for our sins, and risen from the dead, now lives at the right hand of God, to intercede for us: and all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to them who come to God by Him.'

The energy, the vivacity with which the old woman detailed these important heads of doctrine, speaking deliberately, and pausing after each, while her hand placed on his arm seemed anxious both to arrest his attention, and to direct his movements, quite overawed for a moment even the dissolute young scoffer, whom she addressed. At length he looked up, and with somewhat of his usual pertness remarked, 'So then, this is all the good news we have had such a fuss about?'

'Not all,' replied Mrs. Green: 'but this is enough of it to make you happy now and for ever, if you receive it into your heart by faith.'

'Oh, many thanks to you, it is no affair of mine: the silly girl yonder sent me upon a fool's errand, that's all. However, I am much obliged to you, ma'am,' he added more respectfully, 'for the trouble you've taken. 'Tis one thing to answer a question when a body asks you, and another to come preaching into people's houses whether they will or no.' Then crumpling the paper, and thrusting it into his pocket, he shook hands with the old lady, nodded to the rest, and placing his hat on one side of his head, walked out, whistling a jig.

'I'm glad he came,' remarked James; 'and to tell the truth I'm glad he is gone.'

'I wished him a hundred miles off,' said Mary, 'till I found he brought a message from poor dear Sarah. He interrupted us talking about Richard; and indeed if I wasn't thinking of Richard, Charles would always put me in mind of him.'

'How can you say so, Mary,' exclaimed Helen; 'how can Charles Wright possibly remind you of our own dear Richard?'

'Just the same, Helen, as a dark, dull winter's day in this foggy town makes me think the more of the warm bright sunshine of our morning walks by the sea-side, with the little waves dancing to the tunes the birds sang.'

'But remember, my love,' said the widow, 'that what

you complain of, both in the place and in your cousin, is owing to the absence of light. The bright sun in the firmament cannot dart his rays through the thick mists that hang over this town, or it would be very different; neither does the brighter Sun of Righteousness shine upon poor Charles to drive away the unlovely darkness from his character.'

'Charles is ugly enough,' observed Mary; 'but Sarah is much worse crippled than he; yet I think her quite a beauty when she looks so fond at us, and thanks us for showing her any little kindness, and asks questions about the Lord Jesus. Well, I hope now we shall have the rest of the Sunday to ourselves.'

But this wish was scarcely uttered when another tap at the door ushered in Mr. South.

'Glad to find you so comfortable at last, neighbors; I thought I'd come in for a bit of chat; but 'twas hard to make out your lodging. I met Charles Wright in the next street; he told me he had no idea where you lived.'

'Oh, what a wicked story-teller he is,' cried Mary, 'why he has just left us.'

'Ay,' muttered the visitor, with a shrug, 'that's factory morals; he didn't like me to suppose he had been in such good company.'

'It was owing to you that he came here, Mr. South,' said Helen, 'and I dare say granny will tell you all about it.'

Thankful for such an opening, the widow took the hint, and succeeded in making her new friend listen to a pretty full statement of truths that he would as willingly have been excused from hearing; but she was not one of the inconsistent Christians who put their candle under a bushel when those who most need to have the light placed before them enter into the house. As a guest in other places she was necessarily sometimes under comparative restraint, and therefore she preferred her own home, where full liberty of speech prevailed on the *subject most important*; contenting herself with the convic-



tion that those who loved the theme would enjoy it; while those who loved it not, were in the way of profit if they stayed, and free to depart when they chose.

South, however, came to talk about the mills, and resolved to let the old lady have her say first, in the hope that she would then listen to him. He was disappointed; for when, on her coming to the end of her lecture, he began his discourse, she mildly but decisively interrupted him. 'Excuse me, neighbor, but this being the day of rest from worldly labor, we must hallow it by shutting out all worldly thoughts and subjects too. If you will join us in reading and conversing over the Bible, in our hymns and prayer, we shall be most happy to have you make one of our party: if not, don't be offended, neighbor, that we must go on, even if it be the means of our losing your company.'

'Oh, ma'am, I'm sure it would be a great pleasure to me to join you in all those good things, if you think a little rational talk so wicked on Sunday; but I have outstayed my time already, and must bid you good bye.'

'Dear granny,' said Helen, 'how glad I am you got him to listen so long. Poor man! I fear he has a very uncomfortable home, and that was why I was so bold as to speak about Charles' message.'

'If he tells it again,' remarked Mary, 'Charles will get finely laughed at, and that will make him more spiteful than ever.'

'Then perhaps I did wrong,' said Helen, looking distressed.

'No, my dear child, you did perfectly right. It is our duty to use whatever opportunities God gives us of being faithful to others, for their good consequences belong to God.'

'You know, granny, the apostle warns us against doing evil that good may ensue; but I am afraid I often hold back from doing good for fear evil may ensue—that is, something unpleasant to myself or to those I love.'

'We are all tempted to do that, Helen; but we must

pray to be made valiant for the truth, and never to shrink from declaring it. The fear of man often bringeth a snare.'

Helen deeply felt that it did ; and she laid up in her heart the counsel now given by the friend who little knew what was passing in her thoughts. She had, at the moment of speaking to South, been almost withheld, from the apprehension of a fresh burst of malignity on the part of Phœbe, if he should repeat it at Wright's ; but she overcame the suggestion, and boldly called forth what she hoped would profit the poor man. He was not an ill-natured person ; and though on the same afternoon he saw some of the family, nothing passed his lips on the subject. Our poor cottagers, meanwhile, enjoyed their Sabbath exercises in peace ; attended an evening service, and closed the most comfortable day they had yet passed in M. with the united voice of tuneful praise.

Next day, the landlord brought tidings of what he called fine luck : there was an excellent opening for Willy in a silk-mill not very far off, and the person under whose charge he would be was a friend of his own. ' Just the sort of man for you, Mrs. Green ; for when I went to his house last night, they were singing psalms as loud as they could bawl, and I had to come away without seeing him : however I met him this morning, and he's ready for the boy.'

This was an inducement not to be slighted, and when, on a short interview, the widow found Mr. Parkins a serious man, with every appearance of being what the landlord represented him, she committed Willy to his charge ; while James was half reconciled to remain at home by the old gentleman's assurance that he was to have some very nice employment, which was realized the next day by his bringing in a few tools, with sundry bits of wood, and instructing the boy how to set about making small articles for sale.

The widow visited her daughter ; but Sarah, after *much* suffering, had been ordered an opiate, and was in

a sound sleep. She therefore got no information as to the result of Charles' mission, of which his mother evidently knew nothing, by her apologizing for not one of the family ever going to see them yet. Mrs. Wright seemed sulky and downcast, and the manner in which she received a present that her mother insisted on making, in return for the trouble and expense incurred by entertaining so large a party, proved that money was just then highly acceptable. She brightened up as soon as the gift, after many pretended objections, was safely deposited in her tea-caddy, and became so sociable that the widow hoped to lead her to listen to spiritual counsel; but here, as usual, she was disappointed.

We must now leave them, to take a peep into the mill of the Messrs. Z.

Mary had described the spinner to whose wheel her frame was attached, as looking equally cross with old Buckle, but being, like him, better than his looks. This was true; the poor man was soured by a life of extreme labor, and his health so materially affected as to increase the gloom of his countenance; but he was not habitually ill-tempered. With the rest, he could enjoy any variety in his monotonous path; and Mary was so unlike all her companions, that she afforded him frequent amusement.

The little scavenger whose feelings the thoughtless girl had hurt on the first day was now become her special protégé; and wo to the person who should inflict any needless annoyance on Katy Malony; such wo at least as Mary Green's most eloquent and energetic rebukes could inflict. She had, for a wonder, met with a heart quite as warm as her own, a poor, persecuted, solitary child, simple as a babe in the cradle, but sensitive to an extraordinary degree, and gifted with that power of attachment which, like the ivy to its supporting oak, clings round the object of its grateful veneration, and would rather perish than be torn from it. Besides, poor little Katy had been struck by the respectable dress and deportment of the new piecener, and readily yielded her a

degree of deference quite delightful to Mary Green, who, although she would have been really distressed at the idea of being thought proud, had more than the average share of that corrupt principle within, and dearly loved to be regarded as a superior. The expression of Katy's uplifted eyes, as she peered through the whirling threads at her companion above, and the pretty soft brogue, an accent quite new to her protector, in which she uttered 'Miss Mary, ma'am,' were more gratifying to her than she was aware of, from the deep respect which they implied: while the zealous devotion of the scavenger in picking from Mary's can the woolly particles that often covered its contents, to the total neglect of her own poor portion, and the eagerness with which she volunteered every possible good office, showed that love was the root from whence all sprang.

Katy's extreme simplicity, together with some occasional mistakes which they were pleased to call Irish bulls, rendered her quite a butt to those around her. She happened to be the only one of her race in that part of the room; and having but lately come over, that is about a year before, she was considered fair game for the very poor witticisms of her neighbors, whose attempts at correcting the Irish girl's phraseology sometimes diverted Mary beyond bounds; for she was too well instructed not to discern that the teachers were frequently further astray from accuracy than the pupil. This she failed not to point out, often with so much humor as quite to upset the spinner's gravity, and to provoke unmeasured resentment on the part of the mortified persons, which they usually contrived to wreak upon poor Katy, as the most effectual way of making Mary excessively angry. Her occasional reports of these matters, cautiously as they were given, convinced her grandmother that she was in a very unsafe position between the two parties, as regarded her own humility and forbearance; but Katy became, from her recitals, an *object of such interest* to the household, that no one



could wish to check Mary in her generous line of conduct towards the poor desolate little creature.

There was a press of work ; nobody could afford to go home to breakfast, even of those who lived, like the Greens, within five minutes' run of the mill ; and all took their cans, Mary's always replenished with bread and milk, Katy's with sometimes a spoonful of stirabout, sometimes a broken crust, and not unfrequently empty.

'What are you doing there at my can, you little meddling fool ?' said a big girl to Katy one morning.

'Sure, then, 't isn't your can I'm touching, at all ; 'tis Miss Mary's own.'

'Miss Mary, forsooth ! Why don't you say Lady Mary ?'

'Lady Mary's can,' repeated Katy, with great simplicity.

An immoderate roar of laughter followed, in which the spinner joined ; Katy blushed, and looked indignant, for she was sure the laugh was at her expense. Just then, Mary returned to her frame from the farther end of the apartment, and a general shout was raised of, 'Room for Lady Mary !'

'What's all this riot about,' said the overlooker, approaching with no gentle aspect, 'take care you don't get some sauce to your breakfasts,' and he drew a strap that he was preparing to fix to some part of the machinery through his fingers.

'What does this mean ?' asked Mary, in a louder tone than was prudent.

'Hush !' whispered Katy, 'it's a bobbing we'll get, ma'am, if we ben't quiet.'

'A bobbing !'

'Yes ; that's a strapping ; a very sore thing it is.' And the little girl writhed as if under the recollection of such discipline.

'Nobody shall bobby me, Katy ; and nobody shall bobby you ; so make yourself easy. How nicely you

have picked my mess ! it was all over flue, for I saw it : come, let's see, what have you got for yourself ?'

' Mine's all done, Miss,' and she showed her empty tin : it had evidently contained nothing but water, a few drops of which had trickled down the sides.

' Here now, hold it quick, Katy, I have plenty to spare.'

' Oh no, Miss, avourneen, I've had all I want, and why should I be after robbing you ?'

' Do as I bid you : there, sup it up : I wonder,' she added, looking round, ' which of all you would have refused it.'

To this challenge no reply was given, but it excited much anger, and before the day was past Mary was made to feel it through her poor little friend.

Many of our greatest blessings, the deprivation of which would rob life of its best earthly comforts, are enjoyed from day to day without a thought on the peculiar mercy that makes them ours ; or an attempt at computing the amount of painful loss that their withdrawal would entail upon us. Among these every-day advantages is the protection afforded by those equal laws that recognize the right of Englishmen of every class, every age, to the fullest protection, both of person and property. Those enactments which make the rich man's house his castle, embrace with equal efficiency the poor man's hovel. The former is guarded from depredations which the latter might, by dint of physical force, commit ; and he in his turn is alike shielded from any despotic use that his more lordly neighbor might be disposed to make of superior wealth and influence. Even the domestic sanctuary is overshadowed by this all-pervading genius of our beautiful constitution ; and if the prescribed prerogative of parent or husband overpass its legitimate bounds, and offer violence to that immaculate principle, the liberty of the subject, magisterial authority steps in to arrest the uplifted hand by the certainty of retributive infliction should the blow fall ; or with that infliction if *it has actually fallen*.

Is there any exemption from this privilege of protection among our country people in the bosom of their own free England? Does slavery, such as our law repudiates, and to which the very act of inhaling British air is supposed to be fatal, dwell and reign over thousands in our most public, most populous cities? This question must be answered by an appeal to facts: and should the charge that so it is be substantiated by the evidence adduced, the next inquiry is, Shall this state of things be allowed to continue?

## CHAPTER IX.

### INCREASING TROUBLES.

A SHORT period sufficed to show the widow Green the nature of the difficulties in which she had been plunged, in common with thousands more ; and which utterly defied her skill when she cast about for some means of extrication. The gradual decline of many comforts, the increase of privation, and pressure of anxiety as regarded worldly things, were felt as flesh will feel them. The consciousness of having been deceived, entrapped, and fraudfully expatriated from the scene of long respectability and the bosom of a friendly neighborhood, wounded her natural feelings, and mortified the pride that constantly lurks in every human heart. But these were light afflictions indeed, compared with the poignancy of her self-reproach when contemplating, as she was compelled to do, the change that came over the children of her love. Helen was evidently unhappy, and as evidently strove to conceal from her the cause of her dejection, while positively denying that it arose from bodily fatigue or illness ; a line of conduct so inconsistent with the ingenuous character of the girl, as to create involuntary misgivings, wrongful to their object, but of which she was happily ignorant. Mary was becoming proud and passionate to a degree that called for frequent rebukes, and these again seemed to add fuel to the fire of her unholy feelings, or were met with a levity even more distressing still in the eyes of her pious grandmother. *Willy appeared to lose the childish simplicity of his char-*



acter ; he, the petted lamb of the little flock, now seemed to shrink from her eye ; and the laugh excited by his whispered communications to Mary or James, was cautiously checked as soon as it attracted her observation. This rankled in her bosom more painfully than anything else, for she could not bear to lose his loving confidence, to see him stealing away from her side, and desirous of evading the queries of anxious affection ; nor did she like to confess to herself that the sly leer of bold cunning was supplanting the bright open look of innocent animation which had always marked his clear blue eye. To rescue him, at least, was the desire of her heart : but then how could she effect it ? There was no alternative but removal to another mill, or utter idleness. The last, she knew, would prove as ruinous to his morals in such a neighborhood, as the place he was employed in could do : besides losing the care which Parkins had promised to bestow on him in his present situation. Then her circumstances forbade the subtraction of a penny from their poor income, already falling far short of their expenditure, and warning her that she must look out for a yet more humble abode, ere the remnant of her scanty purse, so sadly lightened since she left her village home, was wholly gone.

James alone retained the characteristics that had but a while ago distinguished them all ; but his bodily health declined with a rapidity that startled her. His appetite remained, and many a morsel did she contrive to spare from the cravings of her own stomach to replenish his plate ; but the food seemed to impart no nourishment ; he became more pallid, more languid and enfeebled, as she looked for the reverse. He was uncomplaining, nevertheless ; mild, dutiful, and affectionate. His Bible became more precious, and though he never reproved the waywardness of Mary, or noticed the change in Willy, he evidently strove to supply their lack of attention to their aged friend. To Helen his attachment seemed *always on the increase* ; and of the few smiles

that lighted up her thoughtful countenance, the greater number were drawn forth by the poor boy's endeavors to fix her attention on cheering subjects. Insensibly he became the chief bond of union among them ; for though Mary frequently wreaked her peevishness upon him, and Willy resented his discouraging looks when he indulged in bad-language among themselves, his meek endurance disarmed all unfriendly feeling, and the invalid was dearly loved by all.

Matters proceeded thus, without any material change, for some weeks. Occasionally they visited Sarah, whose mind had evidently been awakened to the importance of spiritual things, though her knowledge was as yet very scanty, and her fears strong. About two months after the entrance of the children on their employment in the mills, Sarah's birthday occurred ; and, as it fell on a Saturday, when they left work earlier than on other days, the widow could not refuse the poor girl's earnest request that they would all join in celebrating it. It was the first time the two families had assembled since the Greens had quitted that abode, and great appeared the change produced on some of the party, in the eyes of their common parent. Sarah had been dressed with some care, and of course looked better : but the chief alteration appeared in her countenance, which, from being distressingly vacant, had become animated, even to restlessness. She seemed to watch for every word that fell, as if it might convey some new information to her mind ; and the dread of her mother, which formerly kept her silent, was so far diminished as to render her frowns and ill-natured speeches ineffectual to check the girl's occasional remarks. Charles of course encouraged her in the unwonted freedom of talking, to annoy his mother. Willy soon got into a corner with his youngest cousin, and they remained apart from the rest, in noisy mirth, which on Willy's part seemed to increase whenever his grandmother called him to order. Mary had *an air of importance* about her, that evidently amused

Charles, who said many ridiculous things, in a complimentary strain, to increase it; and the sickliness of James's looks was rendered more conspicuous by the compassionate remarks they drew forth from his aunt.

But nothing struck the widow so much as the extraordinary change in Helen's aspect. On their entrance she had noticed an encounter of glances between her and Phœbe, marked on the part of the latter by a degree of scornful, malicious derision that could not escape the notice of the most heedless looker-on; while Helen's usual expression of retiring modesty gave place to one strangely foreign from her natural aspect. On meeting Phœbe's half-opened eyes, her own expanded, and fixed in a gaze, almost a stare of proud and high defiance, under which the other presently quailed, though the contemptuous curl of her lip, as she dropped the long lashes, gave her the aspect of disgust, rather than of conscious guilt. Still Helen flinched not: her eyes were riveted on the downcast face, and she stood erect, the very personification of indignant, haughty disdain. Could it be Helen Fleetwood,—the gentle, retiring maiden, the subdued young Christian, to whom even the aged pilgrim secretly looked up as a pattern of that "meekness of wisdom" which she had prayerfully inculcated, and praisefully marvelled at, as its growth exceeded her most sanguine hopes? The enigma was no less painful than strange; nor did her perplexity decrease when Helen, who was generally the last to speak, and whose soft tones fell almost whisperingly on the ear, abruptly turned, without advancing from her position right over against Phœbe, and addressing the poor sick girl, said, in a full, firm tone, 'My dearest Sarah, has the Lord given you better health since I saw you last?'

'Yes, Helen, dear, I am really better, thank you.'

Helen had again turned to Phœbe, and watched her for a moment after this reply was given; then with a half smile, and a slight toss of the head, she crossed over to the *invalid*, saluted her affectionately and in a tone

more like her wonted one, but still much louder than usual, said, 'It is God, not me, you should thank, dear Sarah, who has brought you to see this day: and that he may grant you many more happy returns of it I heartily beseech him.' She then took off her bonnet, adjusted her hair, and sat down with the same air of independent self-possession.

'Dear!' said Mrs. Wright, with affected admiration, 'how soon some people rub off their rust in the mills!'

A suppressed titter from Charles was the only notice taken of this; and his mother resumed, 'Mary looks as uppish, too, as anybody: quite a change, I declare.'

'To be sure,' replied Charles, 'who would not feel their own respectability, and be proud of it, among such a ragamuffin set as we factory people are?'

'Pride,' said the widow, 'was not made for man, in any station; and least of all for humble day-laborers like us.'

No answer was given; and matters went on much as has been described, until Wright's entrance, with some cakes, gave signal for the tea-table to be surrounded. A restraint was evident on all the party, except Helen and Sarah, who took and kept the lead in conversation. There seemed to be an understanding between them that puzzled the widow, and excessively annoyed Mrs. Wright.

'It's a long while since I had so many friends about me on a birth-day,' said Sarah.

'That's false,' retorted her mother; 'but I daresay you reckon one new friend as good as two old ones.'

'The oldest friend I have, mother, is the newest to me; and worth a hundred others.'

The party looked at her with astonishment; only three of them understood the paradox, and to them it was a source of deep joy. A glance passed between Phæbe and her mother, the purport of which was caught by Charles, whose face almost blackened with anger as *he scowled at them both.*



‘That Friend,’ observed Helen, ‘will never leave you nor forsake you.’

Mrs. Wright’s rage here broke forth: ‘Upon my word, young woman, this isn’t to be borne. You, a beggarly stranger, come here by my mother’s means; and set yourself up to be a better friend to that poor foolish girl than her own flesh and blood! Such impudence’——

‘It was not of myself I spoke, ma’am,’ replied Helen quietly.

‘And pray, ma’am, if a body may be so bold as to ask, who was it?’

‘Jesus Christ,’ answered Sarah.

‘Hold your crazy tongue, you idiot,’ vociferated Mrs Wright; ‘must you turn canting hypocrite too?’

The widow interposed, for she saw a storm gathering in the countenance of Charles. ‘Daughter, that blessed name speaks only of love, peace, and joy: let it not be made an occasion of strife.’

‘My maxim,’ said Wright, ‘is that there can be no quarrelling except two people agree to it: and I hardly think there are two in this little family party to agree to make poor Sarah’s birth-day an uncomfortable day to her. So now let’s have an end of all squabbles.’

Calm was restored; but no change came over Helen. She retained the same air of conscious superiority, fixing, from time to time, the same full, undaunted gaze upon Phœbe, and frequently addressing Sarah in terms of fondness. Charles never once looked at her, neither did Phœbe, but every sound of her voice appeared to bring a sly sneer on the girl’s face; which was indeed formed to wear such an expression.

All this distressed the widow Green. She looked round upon her children, and in none could she trace anything wherein to rejoice, save in James and Sarah; both of whom were evidently fading like summer blossoms. *She thought of past scenes: of her little cottage*

with its plain white walls, the honeysuckle that clustered round the casement ; the song of birds from a neighboring thicket ; and the bright faces, the clear merry voices within, that harmonized so sweetly with them. Again, her thoughts reverted to the old churchyard, where her dear Richard was perhaps even then slowly tracing the pathway near his parents' grave, on the return from a day's healthful labor in his native fields. She dwelt on the promise of his character, the hope that in after years he would prove a valuable servant of that Master in whose fear and love she had carefully trained him : and as this bright picture of her mind darkened with the contrast of the reality then before her, tears swelled in her eyes, and her spirit almost breathed the murmuring inquiry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Helen marked her emotion ; and it was happy for herself that she did. Even the pang which at that moment wrung the widow's bosom was among the "all things" that worked for good to those afflicted children of God. Oh, if it was given to such to know the end from the beginning, how lovely in their eyes would be the most affrighting of dispensations, seeing that each is shaped to promote that end of their faith—the salvation of their souls, the meetness that must be wrought in them for the incorruptible inheritance already prepared ! But the tree of forbidden knowledge was a tree of spiritual darkness, ignorance, and sorrow : it opens man's eyes to present afflictions, but closes them against the peaceable fruits of righteousness that spring therefrom, when once he has been made a partaker in the faith and hope of the gospel.

When the time for speaking of going home had arrived, Helen inquired of Sarah whether she did not wish them to sing before they parted ; an assent was given, but with a flush on the cheek and a look of evident anxiety. Helen waited not any farther encouragement ; she called the children to her, and at once took the lead in that *exquisite hymn*.

Jesus, and shall it ever be  
A mortal man ashamed of thee !

Often had the solemn strain resounded from the walls of their distant cottage ; often had it been carolled on the cliff that overhung their romantic sea-view ; and within their antique church it was a favorite selection with Mr. Barlow ; but never had the widow Green heard it breathed in tones so thrilling as those which now issued from the lips of her foster-child. The voice of the girl lost none of its sweetness ; but there was a fulness, a depth, a fervency, and a solemn pathos added, that struck every hearer as something extraordinary. They sang it throughout ; and in the last verse but one, the feeble voice of Sarah tremblingly joined them, gathering strength until the concluding lines,

And Oh, may this my portion be—  
That Saviour not ashamed of me !

were given with unrestrained energy by six voices, including the widow.

A deep silence followed, which was strangely broken by a forced hysterical laugh from Phœbe, while at the same moment Charles quitted the room, slamming the door violently after him. No notice was taken, and the party soon separated, Helen's last look, ere she passed out, being fixed on Phœbe, who had, however, turned her back immediately after bidding Mrs. Green good night.

James was greatly fatigued ; Willy scarcely able to keep awake through their evening devotions ; and the widow soon found herself alone with Helen, to whom she resolved at once to speak on the subject of her inexplicable conduct : but before she could open it, the girl suddenly sank on her knees, threw her arms around her, and burst into a violent fit of weeping. Although trembling with the anticipation of something very distressing the old woman forbore to check this burst of natural

feeling. She pressed poor Helen's head to her shoulder, and allowed her to sob without restraint, until, looking up, she exclaimed, 'My granny, my own best and only friend, I have added to your troubles by trying to avoid it: forgive me—I would not have concealed anything from you, only that I knew it would grieve you: but I saw by your looks this evening how sad you felt, and that my behavior distressed you. I will now tell you all.'

'Compose yourself first, my love: you have been sadly excited this evening, and that is a thing you are not used to.'

'Not till I came to the mills, granny: but now I am indeed used to it. Oh, you don't know,' she added with a fresh burst of tears, 'what it has cost me to keep it all to myself; and already I feel happier since I told you even thus much.'

'But did you not tell it to a better Friend, Helen?'

'I did indeed: how else could I have held out? But, granny, it is hard to walk by faith, always resting upon what one cannot see, with none upon earth to pity and console us.'

The widow felt that it was; yet wondered that Helen should have deprived herself of the sympathy and counsel so readily at hand in her own home. She waited, however, and the girl, who seemed to have now lost all power of hesitating, proceeded to repeat her tale. To give it in full, as she now related it to her maternal friend, would be neither useful nor judicious; but the outline was as follows.

After a course of persecution such as has been already described, a new and most harassing attack upon her feelings commenced, owing to a discovery made by Phoebe, that Sarah was in the habit of sending her messages, and receiving answers on religious subjects. Charles was the bearer of little bits of paper, open, on which he had scrawled, at the poor maimed girl's desire, *short questions*; in reply to which Helen sometimes had



to note down references to passages of scripture; and this she did the more readily, because he would have to read them to Sarah. It was done in an open manner, in presence of whoever might be at hand, and never without some witnesses: yet from it Phœbe had pretended to draw an inference injurious to Helen's good name; and on this base assumption of her own contriving she openly pointed her out as an unprincipled, profligate character. The insults to which she was now exposed were more trying than any that she had before encountered, and the more so because she could not at first discover their origin. On the preceding day, she had become acquainted with it, and also learned that Sarah was partly aware of the cruel persecution to which her Christian efforts for that poor girl's instruction had exposed her. Astonished and indignant at the wanton wickedness of her slanderers, Helen had openly demanded from Charles the contradiction which he was bound to give; but he evaded the subject, and Phœbe loudly declared that if she had dared to enter their house that evening, or if, being obliged to go, she opened her lips on any topic connected with religion, or tried to lead Sarah to it, she would directly expose her to the family, and get her driven out, in disgrace, from the home she had intruded into. The young people about them had applauded this; and told Phœbe if she had spirit to do what she threatened, it must be a benefit some way: for that either Helen's hypocrisy would then be exposed, or else she must leave off pretending to be better than she was. Phœbe pledged herself to carry it out; and promised to bring them a full account of the matter on the following Monday.

'So, granny, when we went in this evening,' continued Helen, 'I had this before me, that whichever way it went, I must suffer. I don't know how it was, but feeling myself to be innocent of such bad conduct as they charge me with, and knowing too that Phœbe herself is as wicked as anybody, and that all their spite against me

is only because I care for the soul of that poor dear dying girl, I felt something come over me that I am afraid was pride. I did not fear Phœbe, nor any one else ; I wished her to see that I did not, and I almost desired her to do the worst she could against me, because I was sure God would not suffer such wickedness to triumph. I also wanted to show poor Sarah that they had neither frightened nor shamed me ; but I saw you observed me ; and when you looked so sad at tea, and the tears came into your eyes, it struck me that you might suspect something wrong, and be fretting about me. So I resolved to tell you all. And now don't fear ; for though God knows my simpleness and my faults are not hid from him, he also knows that I have not given occasion for this ; he will make my righteousness as clear as light, and my just dealing as the noonday. And oh, what a blessed thought it is that while they revile me and persecute me, and say all manner of evil against me, falsely, it is for the Lord's sake, because I am trying to do his work, in bringing a poor wounded, straying lamb to the bosom of the good Shepherd !

The widow answered tenderly and soothingly, confirming this trust in the Lord, and wisely deferring to a calmer moment the cautions that she saw were needed. She was confounded at the exposure of such heartless depravity on the part of her own grand-children, and fully aware of the peril in which Helen was placed ; she was also startled at discovering in the girl's character strong traits of high spirit and enthusiastic feeling, where all had appeared so quiet, so humble, almost too timid and shrinking for the necessary conflicts of life ; and she felt the need of a double portion of the wisdom which cometh from above, to direct her in the difficult task of counselling one so circumstanced. Her mind was in one sense greatly relieved by the confidence of her adopted child, thus restored to her ; but many and sharp were the thorns of perplexity this night added to those which *had long strewn her pillow.*

The following day brought her farther acquainted with the extent of the factory evils; for on her telling Helen that if the persecution continued she would make an appeal to the justice and humanity of the managers, the latter replied that it was useless so to do: since in anything which did not concern the interests of the mill they would never interfere. 'But,' returned the widow, 'the interests of the mill are nearly concerned in this; for how can they expect such a set of immoral, unprincipled young people to do their duty by their employers? They must surely be idle; and not to be trusted for a moment when the master's eye is off them.'

Helen shook her head: 'If it was to depend on ourselves and each other, granny, we might be idle; but you forget we have to work along with the machinery. *That* is never idle; it goes on, on, on, and we must keep pace with it. Our fingers are employed and our feet too; but our tongues are free, and all the mischief that bad tongues, prompted by evil hearts, can do, is carried on, to the ruin of the work people, but not to the hindrance of the work. All that the overlookers care for is to see everybody feeding the engines, or drawing out the cotton, winding, piecening, and all the rest of the business. And besides'—she hesitated, looked more distressed, and then added, 'You are greatly mistaken if you think the men who overlook our work care for our morals—they themselves are often among the worst of the bad.'

'Is it possible?' asked the widow, while a chill of horror crept over her.

'In our mill it is so, as I know right well.'

'Then, Helen, I will remove you from it.'

'I am afraid, granny, that would be useless. I thought about it often myself; but there is so much acquaintance among the work-people through the town that a bad report of me raised in one mill would follow me to another, and I should only have the same battle to fight over again, with the disadvantage of having been driven out of my first place. No, let me stand my ground, and

strive by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish people ; for indeed ignorance is the root of it ail. Poor things ! They have not been taught their duty, and how should they know it ? What do Phœbe and Charles ever hear at home, to strengthen them against the bad examples that they have been exposed to ever since they were mere babes ? and yet theirs is a respectable home, and they don't go back, like many others, to find their parents drunk and fighting ; and though Mr. Wright does not look after them as he might do, still I cannot think he would allow them to go to the gin-shop if he knew of it.'

'The gin-shop !'

'Yes : they all drink, particularly Johnny, and that is what makes him so stupid, for his work is not very hard.'

'Oh, what have I done,' groaned the widow, 'in bringing you here ?'

'Perhaps it is for good, dearest granny ; indeed I am sure of that with respect to poor Sarah ; and who can tell what others may be the better for it ?'

'Blessings on you, my Helen, for the comfort you give me—you, who might well reproach and upbraid me. But how, my poor child, will you meet these cruel people to-morrow ?'

'In the strength of a good conscience, and trusting that as I am not ashamed to confess the Lord before men, he will not be ashamed of me.'

'But be very watchful, love, over your own heart : spiritual pride sometimes springs up very unexpectedly, where worldly pride has been cut down ; and the deceitfulness of our nature helps to keep us ignorant that it is as bad a weed as the other.'

'I never had much worldly pride, had I, granny ? except indeed the pride of a good name, which I did not know the value of in my own sight till—till,' she sobbed, 'till they took it from me.'

'No, Helen, they have not taken it from you, nor ever



shall,' replied the widow with rising indignation. 'We live in happy England, where the laws are made for poor as well as for rich ; and one of those laws protects an honest person's good name against slander. But we will not talk of that now : let us rather seek for direction in the word of God ; and depend upon it matters are not so bad even in the factories, that I should not see you righted if this goes on.'

Helen sighed : she somehow felt that for her there was no help in man ; but she said nothing to discourage her more sanguine friend.

Meanwhile, the widow Green secretly resolved to act at once upon what she had discovered ; and to obtain for the innocent girl that protection which she was very sure no man with an English heart in his bosom could withhold, when made acquainted with the circumstances.

Did she calculate rightly ? We shall see.

## CHAPTER X.

### A SEARCH AFTER JUSTICE.

ON the following evening the widow watched with much more than her wonted solicitude the countenance of poor Helen on her return from the scene of trial. It was pallid, downcast, and sad, expressive of calm resignation, such as had ever been its aspect under the few clouds of sorrow that had crossed her peaceful path. When alone, the old woman eagerly questioned her as to the reception she met in the work-room.

‘Something different from what I expected, granny, for it did not occur to me that Phœbe would tell a downright falsehood, because there was nobody but me to contradict her. She made them believe that I had been put to shame before the whole family, adding that of course I would deny it. I saw it would be useless to do so, and therefore only told her privately there was One to judge between us, who had declared he would put the lying lips to silence. After that, I bore without speaking all their mocks and reproaches. I felt that I was too helpless to vindicate the holy cause of religion which they were attacking through me : so I secretly committed it to God, and myself too ; beseeching him to clear my character so far as the evil they spoke of me affected his name and glory.’

‘And did no one take your part, my poor child?’

‘There is not much feeling in a mill, dear granny. You have often told us that sin hardens the heart, and it *is too true*. All the laborers there do not perhaps join in

open wickedness, but they see and hear so much of it, that without they have the fear and love of God in them, they are like the giddy children down in our own dear place at home, playing among the newly-tarred fishing boats, as I have often seen, reminding me when I looked at their smeared skins, of the text, "Who can touch pitch and not be defiled?" So it is with the factory children.'

'But, surely some of them must know right from wrong?'

'If they have been taught to do so they either forget it or cease to regard the difference. The truth is, if I was as bad as they could make me out, and ten times worse, it would not bring on me any ill-will. It is my trying to keep myself unspotted from that wicked little world, granny, and refusing to partake in their sins, that makes them spiteful. It is not me they hate, but the holiness which I strive to follow, because without it I shall not see the Lord.'

'Follow it still, my Heien, for he who has called you to-do so will most certainly give you the needful power. Is not his word full of precious promises to that effect?'

'Indeed, dear granny, indeed it is! I doubt whether in all your long life you found them so precious as I did to-day, when trying to "keep my mouth as it were with a bridle;" and the more I felt the comfort and support of God's presence, the more my heart bled for the poor ignorant desperate creatures about me, whom Satan was leading captive at his will. I could not be angry with them, if I had tried. Oh, it is a dreadful thing to see so many poor children given up to learn all manner of wickedness, with nobody to care for their souls! I would not be a mill-owner, granny; no, not for the worth of all the manufactures in England. I could have fallen on my knees in the midst of that crowded room to bless God that I was a poor despised factory-girl, and not an employer. Aye, and I would almost sooner be the worst among those wretched characters, with none to teach or

guide me, than the person who, with knowledge and opportunities, and a BIBLE IN THE HOUSE, has to answer to God for letting those souls perish, while their poor bodies are worn out by hard and cruel labor to swell his unholy gains !'

The girl's cheek beamed with the hectic flush of indignation as she vehemently uttered these words. Her own wrongs moved her not as the deeper injuries inflicted on her persecutors moved her. She paused but for a moment, and then resumed.

'Mr. Z., I know, has daughters growing up : would he send them among us for an hour every day ? Not he. He knows too well that their health would be destroyed by staying even so long in the heat, the steam, the stench and the dust of rooms, where we are pent up from early morning to late night ; and he knows that they would never again be let into respectable society if they were supposed to hear the vile, filthy talk that his poor laborers use, and the men he sets over them encourage ; and which he never dreams of checking, either by his own presence, or by setting any moral, not to say religious person, to watch them. I wonder if Mr. Z. thinks there are two heavens, one for masters, another for slaves ; or how he expects to escape the reproaches of his victims, if both should meet in the place where God has declared that the covetous as well as the abominable shall go !'

'Helen, my love,' said the widow, who trembled at the picture placed before her, 'let us drop this fearful subject for to-night. We, who have for ourselves strong consolation, having fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel, will now intercede for the unhappy beings of whom you speak. All mill-owners are not alike : some pious and humane men may be found among them, and God can increase the number. Let us pray him so to do.'

Helen was soon wrapped in the heavy slumber induced by over-exertion ; while the aged woman gazed on her *flushed cheeks*, and watched the catching of her unequal



breath, with sorrow embittered by self-reproach. She then stole to the couch where Willy and James reposed, the former apparently disturbed by some irritating dream, his knitted brow, curled lip, and the soiled fist that lay clenched on the pillow presenting a strange contrast to the corpse-like beauty of his brother's tranquil countenance, pale as the snow-drop, unruffled and serene; and the delicate hand that rested on a little hymn-book, Richard's parting gift, which James treasured above all earthly things except his Bible. 'Beside this bed the widow knelt and prayed and wept; and then repaired to Mary's little mattress, with a caution that proved needless, for Mary was awake. In answer to the inquiry whether anything ailed her, she said, 'No; but I heard a fine speech from Helen, and could not sleep for thinking about it. She spoke so loud, I heard every word; and I only wish Mr. Z. had heard it too. But, granny, what have they been doing to Helen? I don't wonder at their teasing me, who often provoke them; but she is so quiet, and good, and wise, what fault do they find with her? Oh, I can tell, myself. It is because being quiet and good and wise are faults in a mill. Miss Phœbe Wright is just a pattern there, and our sweet Helen a disgrace.'

'Remember, Mary, that poor Phœbe is as nearly related to me as you are.'

'So much the worse for her; she is the more bound to take example by you, and to follow your good advice, granny; but instead of that she tries to set us against you, and to make us ashamed of being obedient. She flattered me, and would have soon made me unkind to Helen, only I found her out in time, and all by means of my poor child.'

'Your child!'

'Yes, my little scavenger Katy,' said Mary, rising in the bed, and settling her night-cap with a consequential air. 'Sit down here, granny, and I will tell you something that will put you in a rage.'

'Fie, Mary, how often have I blamed you for that expression!'

‘Well then, something to shock you. I lean down, granny, to rest your dear back, or I can’t talk comfortably,’ added the affectionate child, ‘for I am sure you have enough to tire you, inside and out.’ Then throwing her arms round the neck of the old woman, she added, ‘No ; nobody shall ever make me undutiful, or ungrateful, or unkind to you, my dear, fond, granny !’

Nobody could long look cold on little Mary ; she was so ardent, so open, so straightforward ; and withal so loving to those who possessed her regard, that it was difficult to throw a rein on her impetuosity, whatever direction it might take. The poor widow felt that some attempt had been made to alienate this warm heart from her, and that its failure had produced a corresponding reaction in her favor. Inwardly rejoicing at this, she returned the embrace, and expressed her readiness to hear whatever Mary had to communicate.

‘You know all about Kate Malony, dear granny : that is, all that I know : but now it comes out her father is in a consumption, and can’t work a hand’s turn : and little Katy’s small earnings is all they have in the world to keep them alive. A half-penny to buy a sup of milk, as she calls it for her father, is a great matter to Katy ; and Phœbe, who has more money than she comes by honestly—oh, don’t look so displeased, granny ; I only say what everybody else says—Phœbe has given Katy a half-penny now and then of late, till the poor child, and I too, thought her a great friend to her. Well, at last Phœbe tried to put it into my head to be envious of Helen, saying how rich my little Katy and her father would think themselves if they had half or quarter of what you bestow, as she says, on a proud stranger ; and often she pointed out poor starving objects, all in tatters, and said, what false charity it is to keep one beggar like a lady, and let so many want a morsel to eat or a rag to cover them.’

‘And did she really say all this to you ?’

‘Not all at once : she dropped the remarks somehow, in a way that prevented my taking fright at them, and I think she would have brought me round, only she let it out to Katy, by giving her money, and telling her if she would help to set me against Helen, and get me to plague you, she would give her more. So Katy, not knowing what to think, asked me to-day what sort of a granny I had ; and then I told her how you had been both mother and father, and everything to us, and to poor Helen, whose father was drowned, and her mother and the little baby died of grief, and left her to depend on strangers. Then Katy began to cry, and said, “ Musha ! Miss Mary dear, is it me that shall speak the bad word to set you against the blessed woman ? ” And so she told me all ; and, granny, I could not sleep for thinking how wicked Phœbe is ; and I heard Helen speaking loud and laying the blame on the people who wont teach the poor factory children any better. I think she is right ; for if they pay us to stop away from our own homes and work for them, they ought to take care we are not taught wickedness at the mills. Instead of that, granny, the very worst mark you can have on you there, is to seem not quite so bad as the rest.’

The widow stifled the anguish of her spirit at this new evidence of the horrors to which she had unwittingly exposed her sacred charge. She talked earnestly to Mary, directing her anew to the source of all wisdom and the only anchor of safety. She represented to her the great responsibility resulting from a scriptural education ; the blessing that she might become, as a little leaven in a lump where leaven was rarely found. She ended with a short prayer, and left the warm-hearted child composed to sleep.

But what a tumult of distressing thoughts crowded on her own mind ! No way of escape appeared, but escape, she thought, they must, from such a scene of depravity. Again she summed up her expenditure, balancing it against her slender means, and ended by resolving to

take on the morrow a decided step towards that reduction which must precede any attempts at removing even one of the children. Accordingly she communicated to the landlord her purpose of seeking a more humble abode, and he, commending her prudence, told her of one where she would be at very little cost ; in a large house, partly dilapidated and marked for pulling down, the rooms in which were, in the interim, let out to families such as hers ; and she might procure a good one for half the price she paid him. Objections presented themselves, but necessity overruled them, and as her landlord had just had the offer of a good permanent tenant to succeed her, he readily forgave a week's notice and expedited the removal. The evening of the second day after this, found the family for the first time in their lives restrained to a single apartment, large, sombre, dreary-looking, with a little rusty stove standing alone in the midst of a spacious fire-place, whence the proper fittings had been removed, leaving a black, broken chasm, down which the wind threatened to rush unimpeded. But the bleak season was still far off ; and the poor widow resolved to let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. As yet she was not in debt ; she had taken a step towards avoiding it ; and, as the two crazy bedsteads were a real bargain, and the four rickety chairs lent by the new landlord, and the small table picked up with the bedsteads at a broker's sale for next to nothing, she had really cause to congratulate herself, while unpacking and arranging her own bedding, and other remnants of the cottage furniture.

James praised everything, as though they had taken up a superior abode ; and when the others rushed in from the mills, even the dark old walls seemed to smile with the reflection of their happy faces ; for particularly happy they must needs look, to satisfy dear granny they felt no privation in the change.

A few questions privately put to Helen and Mary convinced the widow that matters were proceeding from bad



to worse in the mill. The former admitted that she was unceasingly harassed; the latter betrayed the fact of having, in spite of all admonitory cautions, embroiled herself to a great extent in defending Katy from the ill-nature stirred up by Phœbe, to whom the little girl had returned the princely bribe of three half-pence, with a simple speech, the purport of which was suggested by Mary, setting forth that she would not sell her conscience or her friend. This procured for the little orator a slap on the face; and when Mary flew to interfere, she was saluted by the title of 'granny,' and complimented on so soon following the old lady's example, by taking a beggar under her protection, and teaching her to talk cant. The laugh was against her; and this galled her more than severe persecution could have done. The spinner too had joined in it; and however trifling in itself, the widow plainly saw the beginnings of great harm to Mary.

'What can possibly make Phœbe so spiteful against us?' asked the little girl. 'It must be the same feeling that made Cain slay Abel, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."'

The widow was silent; she felt that so it must be; he that is born after the flesh is ever disposed to persecute him that is born after the Spirit; and where the restraints of education and refinement are wanting, this inclination will show itself, particularly where godliness with the powerful though silent eloquence of a holy walk rebukes vice and profanity. Phœbe was evidently a depraved character: such, alas! are to be found in every place; but Phœbe was placed in a sphere where multitudes united to discountenance virtue, while none interposed the powerful check of authority or influence, to uphold even an outward decorum of manners. The voice of reproof is an abomination to the scorners; it will not be brooked in a community of scorners, unless backed by something tending to overawe their unruly spirits. The system, the factory system, under which Phœbe Wright had imbibed the peculiar wickedness that now

pervaded her character, also fed the evil, guarded it, and armed it with power to wound whatever excited its enmity. The factory system surrounded her with associates, by whom she had been encouraged in the ways of daring sin, and who were in turn encouraged by her to unite against any one whose uprightness of principle should tacitly condemn them. A few there were, whose souls loathed the scenes that hourly vexed them; but what could they do? Silent endurance was their only refuge; and even this was enough to subject them to ill-will, unless they either feigned excess of stupidity, or baffled suspicion by pretending to be like the rest.

Excluded from the free air, and almost from the pure light of day; shut up in an atmosphere polluted by clouds of fetid breath, and all the sickening exhalations of a crowded human mass, whose unwashed, overworked bodies were also in many cases diseased, and by the suffocating dust that rose on every side; relaxed by an intensity of artificial heat which their constitutions were never framed to encounter in the temperate clime where God had placed them; doubly fevered, doubly debilitated, by excessive toil, not measured by human capacity to sustain it, but by the power of machinery obeying an inexhaustible impetus; badly clothed, wretchedly fed, and exposed moreover to fasts of unnatural length even from that miserable fare; who can marvel if, under such a system, the robust adult speedily acquires a sickly habit of body, and a morbid state of feeling, leading at once to most awful perversion of mind and corruption of morals? But it is not of adults we are called to speak, it is of children, young, tender, growing children, who require a double portion of rest, refreshment, liberty for the body, and of watchful diligence to direct and guide the mind. If, "Train up a child in the way he should go," be a precept that God himself has vouchsafed to give as the preliminary to an upright walk through life, oh who could marvel though the little ones so fearfully forced *into every way in which they should not go*, became in

riper years incarnate fiends ! The child's stomach, unfitted for long abstinence, and delicately susceptible of injury, becomes doubly disordered by the privation of food and the impurities that find their way into the system from that noxious atmosphere : it loses all desire of wholesome diet, and craves the exciting draught that shall lend a transient stimulus to the frame unstrung by toil ; and chilled by sudden transition from the heated pandemonium of the mill to the raw keen air of night, the poor little victim who reels from exhaustion as it enters the gin-shop, reels thence a drunkard.

Such, with its accompaniments of nameless evils, had been the school into which in early childhood the Wrights were entered : the ill-usage of a savage overlooker had shortened Sarah's term of suffering, and unintentionally interposed between her and the career of vice that Phœbe remained to engage in. On the system, the vile, the cruel, the body-and-soul-murdering system of factory labor, we cannot charge the innate depravity of the human heart ; but we do denounce it as being in itself a foul fruit of that depravity under its hateful form of covetousness, and of being in turn the prolific root of every ill that can inhumanize man, and render an enlightened Christian country the mark of God's most just and holy indignation, provoking him even to blot its place and name from among the nations of the earth.

Impressed with forebodings resulting from the comparatively few discoveries that she had made, and accustomed to obtain a kind if not a respectful hearing whenever she sought counsel or aid of those in a superior rank of life, the widow Green resolved on making known her grievance to the person with whom she had concluded the bargain that had sorely disappointed her. 'It may be,' thought she, 'that want of faithfulness in representing to these people the extent of evils which perhaps they do not suspect, is a part of the cause of their continuance. At least, I will try ; and if justice is not to be had *from the agent*, the employers must be appealed to.'

She chose what appeared the best hour, to avoid interrupting business, and with a throbbing heart but a calm countenance, and quiet respectful deportment, presented herself before the desk of Mr. M.

‘Well, good woman, what’s your business? Have you any younger hands than your own seeking employ?’

‘No, sir; I am the widow Green, who came to you on that errand some weeks back.’

‘Widow Green, Brown, Black, or White, do you think I have a memory for all the colors that pass before me every day? Once more, what’s your business?’

The widow was persuaded that he did remember her; and that the discouragingly rude tone was meant to check her communication. She, however, proceeded,

‘I came, sir, from the village of L. with a letter to Mr. Z. from a particular friend of his: and in that book is the entry made by you of Helen Fleetwood and Mary Green, as laborers in your mill.’

‘Ay, I remember something of it now: so you want to put in the boy you so absurdly kept back. Come; the particulars as quick as you can.’ He opened the ledger, and dipped the pen, with an expectant, impatient look.

‘I am not come to enter the boy, sir, but to acquaint you with some particulars as to the treatment of the girls, which you ought to know’—the violence with which the open pages were slapped together again, made her start and stammer; and before she could recover her breath the agent broke into a vehement strain of reprimand,—

‘What the deuce, woman, do you think I sit here to be pestered with long saws from an old fool like you, because a couple of mawkish parish girls are not treated like countesses in the mill! I guessed as much from the airs you all sported when here before, I thought we should soon have a whine; but make yourself easy as to *anything* you will get by it; and take my advice not to



provoke, by impertinent intrusions of this sort, something more disagreeable than you or they have calculated on.'

Shocked and stunned at the commencement of this ebullition, the old woman recovered her resolution by the time Mr. M. came to a close, and with more firmness and spirit than she had yet exhibited, she retorted, 'If these were the plantations and my children slaves, such language might, or rather must be borne; but, sir, we are in England, and thanks to the laws of this free country, the man who would not be withheld by the fear of God from oppressing his hireling, must render justice, or pay the penalty of breaking these laws.'

'Well argued, I protest,' said the agent in a jeering way. 'But, my dear ma'am, there are other contracts, even in this free country, besides that of holy matrimony, where certain parties having taken each other for better for worse, must abide by the bargain, nolens volens; and learned as you are in the law, you are doubtless acquainted that such is the case in the matter before us, ma'am.'

Doubly indignant at the scoffing manner of the unfeeling man, she quickly rejoined, 'Do you never discard your work-people if they break their part of the contract, and prove idle, disorderly, useless incumbances?'

'We have means to prevent their being so,' returned Mr. M. drily, and with a knowing nod.

'Yes, you have means to force from your poor little laborers the full measure of toil, and to terrify them into submission, but I have yet to learn that there is no redress for them when writhing under cruelty and wrong.'

'You are in a good school for learning many things you don't yet know, my old lass; but be pleased to walk off; for I have thrown away too much time already.'

'Yet, sir, hear what I have to say, I beseech you. My intention is not to offend, but to tell you of things

that I am sure you cannot be aware of, or they would not be suffered to exist.'

'Stuff and nonsense! Things can't go on to please everybody; and least of all, I trow, to please all the grandmothers of some thousands of children. Once more, you must be off.'

'Then, sir, I will call on Mr. Z.'

'Do so.'

'And I will use the advantage that his friend's introduction affords me.'

'By all means.'

'And I must report to him the uncivil reception you have given me.'

'Ah, don't be cruel! Think what will become of me, if I am turned out of my respectable situation, and sent to the mill—perhaps to the tread-mill.'

A suppressed laugh from behind a slight partition extending along the side of the desk, apprised the widow that others were enjoying the ridicule to which she was subjected. Her heart sank; and as she passed the doorway, tears gushed from her eyes. 'I have been too hasty,' she mentally said; 'I have not preserved the meekness that becomes a Christian. I will go at once to Mr. Z., and plead with him in a better spirit, the Lord helping me. I know he is a father, and he must feel; I know he is a gentleman, and he will not mock a poor old woman for appealing to his heart and conscience, on behalf of two helpless orphans. Yes, I will forget the man's affronts, and give the master no room to upbraid me.'

A few minutes' walk brought her to the door; and on inquiring for Mr. Z. she was ushered into his presence.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FURTHER DISAPPOINTMENTS.

ON their first interview, the widow had seen Mr. Z. in his counting-house, and under the character of the man of business: she was now at his private dwelling, and after treading with some wonder the chequered marble that graced the spacious hall, and passing between two rising platforms of rare and fragrant exotics that breathed perfume through the house, and crossing a circular space where the light from a lofty dome of glass streamed down on some fine antique statuary, she found herself in an apartment teeming with what to her rustic apprehension appeared the gorgeous magnificence of royalty. It was, indeed, a large and very handsome room, fitted up with no lack either of taste or cost; the crimson drapery bordered and fringed and tasseled with imitative gold; the couches, ottomans, and luxurious chairs; the inlaid cabinets, and fashionable profusion of *bijouterie* that loaded the carved tables, and even the splendid carpet to which her dazzled eyes were soon turned in abashed bewilderment—all produced on the humble dame an effect that for a moment almost obliterated the subject of her visit.

From a folding door, the partial opening of which showed a table glittering with cut glass and silver plate, the accompaniments of the family luncheon, Mr. Z. advanced, and took his station before the fire-place, where a *time-piece* of exquisite workmanship had just

struck some musical chimes from beneath the immense bell-glass that covered its burnished gold. Mr. Z. drew forth a watch of the same precious metal, attached to a guard, and while he regulated the hands according to the time-piece, said:

‘ You wished to speak to me, I believe ?’

‘ I did, sir ; I feel it is a liberty to take with you ; but the letter I brought from Mr. Stratton some weeks ago, emboldens me to hope you will overlook it.’

‘ Oh, then, you are the person from L. Haven’t they given you work yet ?’

‘ Two of my family, sir, have been employed in your mill, from the time I first saw you.’

‘ Well, and what then ?’

There was something so freezing in the gentleman’s manner, as he threw himself into an easy chair, laid one leg over the other, and fixing his eyes upon the gilt cornice, awaited with imperturbable nonchalance the reply to this natural question, that poor Mrs. Green lacked courage to make known her business. A minute passed in silence, which was broken by his repeating in the same frigid tone,

‘ Well, Mrs. Thingimy, what then ?’

‘ I came to you, sir, because I was unable to obtain a hearing from your agent. All that I want is protection for my poor girls against those who are too strong for them.’ Mr. Z. remained silent and immovable, and she resumed with more earnestness. ‘ I need not tell you, sir, how important it is to your interests, not to mention a higher motive, that honest and diligent laborers should be encouraged, and not exposed to bad example and ill-usage from others of a contrary character. My children, by God’s blessing, are both honest and industrious, and have been carefully kept from evil ; but in the place where they are, it is looked on as a sin to be religious, or even modest. I come to beg your interference to save a dear innocent orphan from cruel slander, and *unjust persecution.*’



Mr. Z. turned his face to her, elevated his eye-brows, and looking at a painting that hung above her head, drily remarked, 'I fancy here's a mistake, good woman. I am not the manager of the mill.'

'But you are the manager's master, sir, and therefore to be appealed to when he refuses redress. Only order an inquiry to be made into the business, and justice to be done, and I will trouble you no further.'

Another silence ensued. A footman then brought in some letters on a silver salver, which Mr. Z. took, and commenced a leisurely examination of the seals and directions. He opened one, and read it with deliberation: then, as he folded it, without looking up, said, 'Mr. M. is my agent.'

'But, sir, Mr. M. refuses to attend to me.'

The gentleman was again buried in contemplation over another letter; and the poor widow, as she gazed on him, then glanced at the splendors that surrounded her, began to feel the workings of that spirit which even in the sanctified bosom too often "lusteth to envy." There sat a fellow mortal, as frail a child of earth and of sin as herself; one who had worked his way, not by the labor of his own hands, but by the toil of others, to the possession of such wealth, and the enjoyment of such luxury, as invested him with a seeming superiority over his brethren of the dust. This, however, she felt was the fruit of enterprise and perseverance; the returns of a great outlay, and as such not to be grudged; but these riches had hardened his heart, had stifled the pleadings of humanity, and made him not only cold and proud, but cruel. 'Surely,' thought she, 'he might tell me at once, and plainly, that he rejects my petition, and bid me go. He ought not to keep me standing here, aged and fatigued as I am, hoping for a more favorable answer, and afraid to lose it by hastily retiring. He wants me to look round, to admire his glittering toys, and to draw a painful contrast between this palace and my own miserable home; he knows that almost any one piece of fur-

which would not be missed out of this room would be a fortune to me, and fit up any poor place with every comfort. Does he want me to leave? would he tempt me to go?" Such aspirations were passing through the mind of the willow, and she felt them to be suggestions of a wrong spirit, yet could not still them, and the scripture crested in her mind,—"Behold his end which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." All was now changed: the contrast that struck her was no longer that of a haughty rich man, glazing in his possessions over a dejected, impoverished fellow-creature, who groaned beneath the pressure of present difficulty and anticipated want; but that of a wretched being, who had his portion here, the god of this world having blinded his mind, before the light of the glorious gospel should shine into it—on to whom the summons might come,—"This night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"—one of those rich men to whom the Apostle's awful apostrophe was addressed, "Go to, now; weep and howl"—yes, the contrast was between such a one and herself, poor in worldly goods, but rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven; brought through much tribulation to seek, to know, to love the Lord; having her treasures laid up where neither moth, nor rust, nor thief could touch it; and knowing that, whatever might be her loss on earth, she had in heaven a better and more enduring substance.

Little did Mr. Z. suspect what thoughts of pity, gradually forming themselves into prayer on his behalf, were occupying the mind of the humble creature who stood patiently awaiting his leisure to speak again. When at last he lifted his eyes and glanced towards her he met a look so full of benevolence, of unaccountable kindness and concern, that it surprised him out of his affected abstraction, and in a tone of angry expostulation he exclaimed, 'Good woman, what, in the name of wonder keeps you standing there?'

‘I was waiting your leave to go on, sir.’

‘To go on! You have my leave to go out, which is more to the purpose. Very extraordinary! that I am to be pestered with matters that only concern my agent. Pray did he send you to me?’

‘No, sir; but Mr. Stratton led me to hope I should find a friend in you.’

‘Mr. Stratton made a fool of you, for his own purposes. Learn, Mrs. What’s-your-name, to know your place; and remember, too, that my private residence is not an office.’ So saying he twitched the bell, and disappeared through the folding doors, as a footman entered, to re-conduct the baffled petitioner by the way she came.

The widow returned to her poor dwelling in a calmer frame of mind than she had quitted it. This resulted from having been driven closer to her Almighty refuge by rebuffs painful to flesh, and such as she had never before experienced, but which rendered doubly sweet to her soul the word of promise, “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” She took her Bible, and read aloud to James, whose thin fingers were busily employed at his work, and the boy thought she had been enjoying some great spiritual privilege, so full did her heart appear of heavenly consolation.

‘Ah, my dear child,’ she observed, when closing the blessed volume, ‘what a hard case is theirs, who among all the adversities of life know not where to look for such comforts as this book affords to us!’

‘I’m sure I don’t know, granny, how they manage; but they seem to think religion would make their troubles worse, instead of lightening them.’

‘If they were allowed to put asunder what God has joined, James;—if they might take the promises and leave the commands, secure happiness without seeking holiness, and serve God and mammon together, we should find a great many who now shun and even revile religion, *very willing* to take it up. But the cross is

what they hate ; pride will not own a crucified Saviour as the only hope, and corruption will not follow Him through trials, in the path of obedience, nor desire the sanctification that would spoil their relish for vain and sinful pleasures.'

'Well, granny, I do think, that is I am afraid, it is not so much the Spirit of God as the sickness I feel, that makes me care so little about idle play, and love the Bible as I do.'

'My darling boy, sickness alone would not wean your heart from earth, much less would it endear the blessed book to your soul ; but this sickness is the cross that your loving Lord sees good to lay upon you ; and because you are his own dear child, he leads you to seek refreshment at that fountain of life, and to delight in the word, which tells you that poor as you are, and helpless, sick, feeble, and sinful, all things are yours, for you are Christ's.'

The boy dropped the long silken lashes in which tears had already gathered, and meekly replied, 'I am not afraid Jesus will cast me out, granny, for I came to Him because he has invited me, and I am sure he never said what he did not mean.'

The widow's heart sang for joy over this simple declaration of a hope that she knew would never, never make the young believer ashamed. How light seemed the affliction which had weighed down her spirit all day, when thus, placed as it were in the balance against it, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory appeared to the eye of faith ! James had never before spoken out, either as to his bodily illness, or the strong hold that his spirit had taken on the promises of the gospel, and she felt how timely was the communication, at once to solemnize and soothe her mind.

But evening came, and brought a renewal of trouble. Helen's face, for the first time, appeared swollen with weeping, and Mary was in a state of excitement rendered *the more evident* by her struggles to conceal it. Neither



entered into any explanation, but Helen, on being urged to speak, said, 'I will no more dissuade you from going to the manager; for indeed I cannot much longer bear it: the work is getting beyond my strength, and they make it heavier than it need to be—all because I will not go along with them in wickedness.'

Little did the widow suspect that the fair young girl so tenderly reared by her, to whom even the language of unkindness was never addressed, had that day been cruelly beaten by a ruffian overlooker! Mary alone knew it.

However, it was evident that some sort of protection must be obtained; and without divulging to any of the family her past proceedings or farther intentions, Mrs. Green made up her mind to try an appeal to the elder brother of the house of Z. who bore the character of a very domestic man, remarkably fond of his daughters. She had never seen him, as they had been absent, and Mr. Stratton's letter was to the other Z. The house was a little way out of town; the grounds through which she had to pass were beautifully planted; and the contrast of fresh air, green leaves, bright sunshine and the singing of birds, to the scene she had just quitted, was most reviving. She trod the velvet grass with the elasticity of a younger step; and her hope brightened as she approached the elegant, but still rural mansion.

She was admitted into the library, a large and cheerful room, of which the long windows opened upon a lawn, diversified with flower-pots. Mr. Z. was attired in a plain loose morning coat, seated at a table where books and writing materials lay before him; at a smaller table, near him, was a lovely young lady, seemingly about the age of Helen, employed in painting a group of flowers. The widow's humble curtsey was acknowledged by a slight nod from Mr. Z., and after glancing at her dress, always neat and highly respectable, he told her to sit down.

'At length, then,' thought the petitioner, as she grate-

fully obeyed, 'at length I have found the right person; and my suit will be heard.'

Encouraged by this belief, she proceeded to state the occasion of her visit; and meeting with no interruption, she entered upon the topic as especially affecting the morals and health of her young charges. She spoke of Helen as a pious, modest, retiring girl, who required nothing more than liberty to remain so, and to pursue her work with the diligence that formed part of her character; but who, because she maintained her integrity among many evil examples, was not only persecuted by her fellow-laborers, but also oppressed, at their instigation, by the people placed in authority over them. All that she sought was an intimation from the superiors of the concern to the men who overlooked the common hands, that they required to have virtue protected, and industry encouraged, instead of the reverse.

During her appeal for Helen, whose orphan state she briefly, but touchingly described, the young lady frequently suspended the operations of her pencil, and listened with looks of kind commiseration: Mr. Z. was silent, and a gloomy expression gathered on his features, which might, however, result from dissatisfaction at hearing of his people's mal-practices. At length, he glanced towards his daughter, and catching one of her compassionate looks directed to the speaker, he abruptly exclaimed, 'Amelia, go to your sisters.'

She immediately left the room; and no sooner was the door closed than Mr. Z. commenced an angry speech, reprimanding the widow for introducing such improper subjects in the presence of a young lady, whose ears ought not to have been assailed by discourse so unfit for a delicate mind.

'What have I said, sir?' asked the poor woman in amaze: 'surely I have avoided every word that could be thought improper; and I never spoke of, or alluded to anything indelicate.'

'*You talked of "drunkards, swearers, and shameless*

people," and drew a picture of misery, dirt and confusion unfit to be heard of in a place like this. It is, let me tell you, no small liberty to come to my house on such an errand at all ; but to talk before my daughter is unpardonable.'

' Oh, sir, though of very humble rank, my poor Helen is modest and delicate as you yourself can desire a female to be ; and she is obliged to hear and to see in their worst forms, all the evil things that I spoke of, and others that I could not even mention before the young lady. Let this move your compassion for her.' But Mr. Z. had worked himself into a passion, for propriety's sake.

' Really, woman, your assurance is matchless ! Not content with insulting my daughter by your low conversation, you must now place some dirty factory girl on the same level with her, and thence argue that I am to go, in person of course, and rescue your distressed damsel from the mill !' and he laughed in bitter scorn as he spoke.

What could the dismayed applicant do to appease him ? Every attempt at explanation seemed to aggravate her offence, and at length she rose from her seat ; a movement that seemed to impart no small satisfaction to Mr. Z. who quickly pulled the bell, and himself striding across the room, opened the door for her, saying, ' I believe you have erred more through ignorance and presumption than any positive wish to offend me : so I shall say no more :—there, go along,' he added, slightly touching her arm to expedite her, as, at the encouragement of this more moderate speech, she once more strove to address him, ' go along, good woman, and learn better manners for the future.'

As she followed a servant through the hall, Miss Z., the innocent cause of, or rather pretext for this rude rebuff, came towards her with money in her hand ; ' I am so sorry for your distress,' she gently said, ' and perhaps you will accept this trifle to buy a few things for your orphan girl.'

‘Dear young lady!’ replied the widow, ‘it is ~~not~~ money that I want: but if I could win your father’s protection for my poor girls, how thankful I should be!’

‘Oh,’ exclaimed Amelia, looking frightened, ‘Papa never allows any of us to interfere in the least about the mills—I must not say one word to him on that, because’—here a side door opened, and an elder domestic appeared, who, darting a look of anger at the poor woman, said in a testy voice, ‘Miss Amelia, your Mamma wants you directly. Directly, Miss,’ he repeated impatiently, as the girl was about to finish her sentence; and, seemingly with reluctance, she walked away. The man growling in an angry under tone to his fellow servant, ‘Turn her out at once,’ followed his young mistress; and the other, a mere youth, proceeding to the door with Mrs. Green, took occasion to whisper, ‘You can’t succeed here: you’ll only make yourself enemies in the mill, by trying to get justice out of it. If the agent isn’t your friend, never reckon on any good by coming to the owners; and our agent is nobody’s friend but his own.’

What a change comes over the face of creation when sadness weighs down the heart that erewhile ‘rejoiced in nature’s joy?’ The sun shone as brightly, the green turf spread as broadly, the flowers bloomed in an atmosphere as fragrant, and the little birds renewed their carol with glee as unrestrained: but no response was found in the poor widow’s aching bosom to their claims on her glad attention. Sorrow had overwhelmed her spirit, always too sanguine because prone to make her own warm-heartedness the standard of anticipations respecting others. Her last hope had failed: of the agent, what she had just heard was evidently true, and too plainly the young footman had represented the uselessness of other appeal. Neither of the Messrs. Z. had chosen to enter at all on the subject of her complaint, and it was clear that an excuse had been seized by this gentleman roughly to baffle her suit, as his brother had contemptuously frozen her into silence. Yet there lingered in her



mind a sort of incredulity as to the possibility of such a state of things existing in England, simply because it was England. She remembered that Mr. Barlow had once held a meeting of his parishioners, in order to give them an opportunity of petitioning Parliament for the total abolition of slavery in our western colonies : a gentleman attended, who detailed the wrongs and described the sufferings of the poor negroes, previous to receiving their signatures. On that occasion, a stout old farmer, of the humbler class, was seated near her ; and she could not forget the feverish anxiety with which he awaited permission to write his name. Half rising from the bench, leaning his hands on the knob of a stout oaken staff, every finger trembling with agitation, while his forehead was streaked with crimson, and his light grey eyes, blood-shot and glistening, seemed ready to start from his head, he stared by turns at the pleader and at the roll of parchment which he held, until the speech was concluded, the petition was spread out, and the ink-stand placed beside it : then he sprang forward with a step that shook the room, and after cutting rather than writing his name on the skin, he returned to his place, drawing the sleeve of his smock-frock across his eyes, and with a sound between a sob and a growl, ejaculated, ‘ Wow ! neighbor Green, the man, woman, or child that wont go on bended knees morning, noon and night, to thank God for being born in Old England, ought to be made a negur slave of.’ Then turning to Richard, he added, ‘ Lad, ye wor born a freeman : ye be a poor boy : but not a Lord in the land can stamp his fine boot on the toe of your old shoe but ye may take the law on him. Think o’ that, Dick ! Liberty and old England for ever !’

The scene had been talked over at night in their own dear cottage ; and Mrs. Barker, with that legal knowledge which it beseemed a beadle’s wife to possess, had expounded to them the law of their native land, exemplifying it by a recital of cases occurring within her own recollection, where for instances of supposed aggression

even ludicrously trivial, certain litigious cottagers had summoned their richer neighbors before a magistrate : ay, and obtained redress too.

All these things had tended to deepen in the mind of our widow the feeling of independence natural to it ; she regarded the legal enactments of her country as being to every poor man " his own vine and his own fig-tree," under whose shadow he might securely sit ; and now, despite of all present experience, she was confident that redress was to be had, though where she could not tell. There was no outrage yet committed—so far as she knew—to warrant an appeal to magisterial authority ; but surely there must be some species of protection short of that. The remarks of South flashed upon her memory, and she dreaded to find his description just, to the letter : but still, she thought, ' we are in England ; and it is not possible that in this English town there should be some thousands of slaves—white slaves—free-born slaves—and my own children among them. No : it is not possible'—and she quickened her pace, as if to escape from the tormenting suggestion that it was not only possible but absolutely true.

When in the evening, the party once more assembled, her attention was partially diverted by seeing Mary pull in with her a singular-looking child, from whose thick, tangled ringlets of dark auburn peeped out a little face, full of expression, and of a complexion the clear beauty of which was not wholly obscured by all the soil that had accumulated upon it. Her bright hazel eyes danced with evident pleasure, and the pretty mouth was dimpled with smiles as it uttered half-coaxingly, half-reproachfully, ' Ah, then, Miss Mary, ma'am, that I wouldn't be let clean myself for the gentry to see me !'

' It will make you more careful to clean yourself, Katy, if I let them see how dirty you are : come along, granny won't be cross to you.'

The little girl advanced, and stood smiling and blushing before the widow, who, kindly patting her cheek,

said, 'So, you are Mary's little friend, Katy Malony.'

'I'm Miss Mary's scavenger, ma'am.'

'And Mary is your piecener,' added Helen, who saw the old woman look grave at this distinction of ranks.

'Yes, I'm Miss Katy's piecener, ma'am,' said Mary in high good humor, imitating Katy's accent as she stood beside her. The little girl looked round, and laughed. After a few more remarks, Mary drew her grandmother aside, and with a face full of earnest anxiety said, 'Oh, granny, that poor child's father is so weak, and so friendless, and treated so unkindly by the people where they lodge! I want you to get him in here, and talk to him; for oh, you can't think how shockingly ignorant he is! You won't believe it, but I found out that he says his prayers to the Virgin Mary—only think! to the Virgin Mary, who died one thousand seven hundred and odd years ago: and he splashes a little pump-water about every night; for what, can you ever guess? No, that you never could—he does it to frighten the devil, granny! Did you ever in all your whole life hear of anything like that, granny?'

The widow had heard of it before; but she only replied, 'Well, my darling, blessed be God for the Bible, which teaches us to avoid all such foolish and wicked ways.'

'That is just the thing, granny: I'm quite sure Katy's father knows no more about the gospel than any heathen at the world's farthest end. I want you to teach him.'

'If you bring him here, we will do what the Lord enables us.'

'Thank you, thank you, my own granny! I brought Katy that she may see how kind you are, and that we are not the grand gentry she takes us for. She will soon bring her father, if you encourage her a little.'

So Katy was encouraged to her heart's content; and having had her 'tay,' as she called it, took leave with a joyous promise that she would ask her father to come

next evening. This little incident gave a pleasant turn to their feelings. Mary was eloquent on the subject of Malony's unaccountable religion; and the widow gave them some insight into its soul-destroying character, from the pages of inspired truth. All the missionary zeal with which Mr. Barlow had loved to inspire his little flock, on behalf of the heathen, was now kindled afresh, its object being a poor Irish papist, who was listening the while to his child's enraptured description of her new friends, and giving her the promise she sought of accompanying her to their dwelling. But when the hour of rest arrived, the widow could not help noticing the evident difficulty and pain attending the movement of Helen's arm. She questioned her, and was told that the fatigue was certainly great, and that any amelioration of her mental and bodily sufferings would be welcome. Beyond this, she owned nothing; but her frequent starts and restlessness during the night increased her friend's uneasiness to such a pitch that she resolved on making another attempt to discover where redress for factory-wrongs was to be sought: and to this end she made up her mind that a visit to the clergyman whose ministry she attended would be the safest step. He was certainly a good man: he preached the truth, and bore a high character for humanity and every other right quality. He must needs know the mill-system, for he had been several years rector of that parish; and he would surely point out to her the best path to take. Once decided upon, this plan left her nothing to regret but that she had not adopted it in the first instance. So, next morning, with as little delay as possible, after setting her simple household in order, she tied on her black silk bonnet and Sunday cloak, and announced herself at the rector's door as one of his parishioners, seeking counsel from him. The servant soon returned, bidding her sit down in a small parlor for a few minutes: and there the widow cheerfully awaited the coming of one who would, as she fondly *believed*, put her in possession of that rare philosopher's stone—*justice in the factories.*



## CHAPTER XII.

### FAILING HOPES.

THE rector was a man of grave, quiet aspect, more stately and reserved than Mr. Barlow, but perfectly kind both in language and manner. He listened not only with attention but with evident interest to the tale; and the significant shake of the head that marked his emphatic dissent from her conduct in yielding to Mr. Stratton's persuasion boded little good. This gesture was frequently repeated as she went on; but her heart never quaked so much as when it was used as a comment on her declaration, that certainly there must be a remedy somewhere, though she had not yet been able to discover where.

‘I now feel, sir, that I have done wrong, very wrong, in catching at a seeming advantage without sufficient thought and prayer; but I erred through anxiety for the welfare of those dearer to me than myself.’

‘I make no doubt of it, Mrs. Green; but when unhappily we neglect the command to be wise as serpents, the harmlessness of the dove will not save us from the consequences of that omission.’

‘In all my ways, sir, I strove to acknowledge God; and I trusted that he would direct my path.’

‘True; but there is a little word of mighty meaning, which is much insisted on in scripture: “Wait.” You seem to me to have overlooked that word.’

‘I acknowledge my fault, sir; I own my hastiness; I take all shame to myself; and believe me, my sufferings

have not been small. But now I come to ask counsel, while humbly receiving your just rebuke. Submit I must to very many privations; my future days must be passed in sorrow and anxiety; and I never can expect again to know the comfort I once enjoyed. But though we must all toil painfully and all suffer in various ways, I want my children protected from vice on the one hand, and from oppression on the other. This is what everybody in a Christian, free country, has a right to expect; and it is all I may now presume to crave.'

The rector again shook his head; 'I can only direct you to seek help of God.'

'But he works by means, sir; and I am bound to use the means.'

'Your case, I lament to say, is that of many others, who on first coming to the mills are shocked at the demoralization prevailing; and not being aware that the evil has outgrown all ordinary means of checking it, persuade themselves that redress may be obtained, until experience shows that nothing remains but to submit to their painful lot.'

'Yes, sir,' said the widow, with some warmth, for she thought the rector treated the matter much too phlegmatically, 'yes, sir, another thing remains; and that is to quit these wicked mills altogether.'

'Of course, if you have any other means of subsistence for your family; but from what you have told me I should fear you had not; and let me, as a friend, dissuade you from another precipitate movement.'

Mrs. Green was greatly distressed; she began to feel the pressure of the bonds that surrounded her on all sides, and with tears in her eyes exclaimed, 'And will not you, sir, for the love of Him whose minister you are, assist me?'

'Believe me,' answered the rector kindly, 'had I, instead of a limited parochial income, twice the revenues of this diocese at my disposal, they would not suffice to answer even a small part of the heart-rending appeals daily made to my charity.'

‘I believe it, sir, from what I have seen ; but it is not money I want.’

‘What then do you require of me?’

‘To help me to remove my poor children into some situation where they may earn their bread, honestly and safely.’

‘It is impossible, unless you have friends in the place to give you a very special recommendation among the upper classes ; and even then I fear the competition is too great to afford you a reasonable hope of succeeding. As a country girl, well brought up, and of unquestionable character, Helen *might* have procured a proper service in some family here ; but even so short a time in a mill (to say nothing of the aspersions so cruelly cast on her) would be an insuperable objection. For myself, I would readily offer to assist you in this way, but the little interest of that sort which I may possess, is, like my purse, taxed to the uttermost : and at this moment I have the parents of several excellent girls, educated in my own schools, anxiously looking to me to avert the necessity of sending them to the mills, by finding domestic situations among my friends.’

The widow sighed deeply ; then, after a pause, resumed, ‘Are you not able, sir, at all to influence the owners and managers of these factories?’

‘Not unless they have been so brought under a higher influence as to esteem the minister for his Master’s sake ; and this, I am sorry to say, is not the case within the sphere of my labors. In fact, your employers, with their families, are church-going people, and pay all outward respect to the ordinances of religion ; but would no more think of allowing any interference on the clergyman’s part with their worldly concerns, than they would of intermeddling with him in the composition of a sermon.’

‘Am I then to look on the case as hopeless?’

‘I wish I could point out any cheering prospect to you ; but I fear you must now abide the consequences of a hasty step ; and patiently await the answer to prayer

from Him who, though for the present he afflicts, will yet show mercy. All these things, howsoever painful they may be, are working together for good to you, if you love God.'

The widow humbly assented; and feeling that there was no pretence for a prolonged visit, took her leave.

This interview was, in its effects, by far the most depressing of all she had recently tried. It seemed as though every door of escape was rapidly closing round her; and at the same time her spirit was chilled to an unwonted degree. She could not deny that the rector had been perfectly kind; that he had listened willingly, answered to the point, and advised her judiciously, besides bringing some scriptural encouragements to her mind; but she missed the earnest zeal in her interests, the cordial sympathy in her griefs, the oil and wine of divine consolation poured into every wound by her Village Pastor. She missed the closing prayer, the fervent parting benediction, all of which her fancy had in prospect mixed up with this visit. Reason told her that it was impossible for a stranger to enter so fully into the case as one whom she had known for years; and that the rector was so beset by applicants, so accustomed to the tale of wrong and sorrow, as to render it surprising that he should have bestowed so much attention on her; yet she felt it, and perhaps not the less keenly because he had so honestly shown her the root of present suffering in her injudicious conduct. We are far more willing to condemn ourselves than to hear from others the same truthful sentence.

Meanwhile, the object of her efforts seemed to recede more remotely from view as she strove to approach it. The very simplicity of the case added to her perplexity. She had hired out her children to devote a stipulated portion of their time to daily labor, in an establishment owned, and, as she supposed, conducted by English gentlemen. She had witnessed many of the various kinds *of service in which the poorer classes of the land engage*;



and she knew that in any case of dissatisfaction on either side, the aggrieved party could at least state his grievance in a competent quarter ; but here she found herself completely baffled, repelled on all sides, she scarcely knew how ; but made conscious that no one admitted his own responsibility, or seemed aware of being under any obligation to judge the cause of the poor who labored for him. It then occurred to her that a system of inspection had been established, and that the gentleman appointed to execute this duty must be the individual to redress what was wrong. It appeared strange that the rector should have failed to point out so obvious a resource ; and she determined to ascertain some particulars. South, whom she knew to be just then out of work, seemed a likely person to give her information on this point ; and making due allowance for the dark coloring that his grumbling propensities would throw over every subject, she thought a statement of bare facts from him might be valuable. To his house therefore she repaired—a dark, dreary, miserable-looking abode—where she found him engaged in reading a dirty newspaper. After a few mutual inquiries, and civil speeches, she put the query to him, without mentioning the circumstances that led to it.

‘ Inspectors ! ’ exclaimed South, with a smile of derision, ‘ yes, I can tell you enough about the inspectors ; and that without going beyond what concerns our own families. When the new plan first came out, we poor people thought we had got a great boon, and should have everything put to rights ; but of all the tricks ever played us, I think that is the most bare-faced. Now, Mrs. Green, please to listen.’

‘ I shall be sure to do that, neighbor.’

‘ Ay, I dare say you’ve begun to find out the want of something in the shape of justice ; but you may look long enough before you find it. This district where we live is under the inspection of a gentleman appointed by government, and it is his duty to look at every mill within it. Now, *how big* do you think this district is ?’

‘Indeed, I can’t say ; perhaps this town and another as large.’

‘You know the map of England?’

‘Yes, pretty well : the children learnt it at home.’

‘Well, ma’am, our inspector’s district includes the county of Lancaster, the county of Northumberland, the county of Cumberland, of Westmoreland, of Durham, and two ridings of the pretty little county of York.’

‘Impossible!’

‘It is true : and the number of mills that he has to superintend is about eighteen hundred. Now there are little more than three hundred days to a year, leaving out Sundays and holidays ; the inspector’s district lies spread over many hundred miles of country ; the mills are greatly scattered, many being in villages, and on little streams in remote places ; and so you may judge what time the gentleman has to look after every one of them.’

‘But surely he has a great many agents?’

‘He has four.’

‘Four!’

‘Four sub-inspectors, called superintendents, who, by flying about, contrive as they say, that one of them should visit each place three times a year, to see how things are going on, to report to the inspector-general, and so forth.’

‘But that is too seldom to be of any real use ; if the person only comes three times in a year, all sort of wrong can go on for nearly four months without a check, and then the complaints will be so many and of such long standing, that he must be quite overwhelmed, and puzzled among them.’

South laughed : ‘The superintendent has not even power to enter a mill, but with the full consent of the owners ; if he hears of any bad doings, he cannot insist on investigating the matter ; he can only send a report to his chief, and it is he who must inquire and punish.’

‘What, the gentleman with the eighteen hundred mills ! It would take him a year’s time to judge upon half the cases brought before him, that had accumulated since his last visit in one large factory town, I should think.’

‘Mrs. Green,’ said South, ‘the inspector has no power to interfere in any case whatever, if the matter complained of did not occur within FOURTEEN DAYS of the time when the superintendent discovers and reports it.’\*

The widow stared at her informant, doubting whether she heard aright.

‘So much for the law, Mrs. Green; and now for the facts to show you how it works. I had a girl of sixteen, brought up in the country, a stout, fine girl, who looked almost eighteen; well, she engaged herself in a mill where they worked all night; and you know people over eighteen may work as much as they please—there is no law for them. My poor girl got covetous of the wages, and represented herself to be more than eighteen, and so obtained regular night-work. Everybody saw it would kill the child; but she had a taste for dress, and nothing could hinder her, because whatever she got besides the regular day-wages was her own, of course. Well; somebody mentioned to the superintendent that she was under age; and when the chief man came, he asked her. She said she was near nineteen; and being, as I told you, a fine grown girl, much stouter than the most of the factory girls are at twenty, he did not doubt her word. She was left to please herself, and so she did; and in a year from that time we buried her.’

‘But you could surely have interposed your authority as a father,’ observed the widow, who saw more to blame in the narrator than in any other person concerned.

‘That’s easier said than done,’ replied South with a shrug. ‘Disobedience to parents is one of the first lessons learned in the mills; and besides, my good neighbor, when you have seen one of the flying visits of our in-

\* ‘If every section of the law had been violated on the 17th of January, and I go to the mill on the 1st of February, I cannot touch him.’—*Vide Evidence of Leonard Horner, Esq., Inspector, given on oath before the Committee of the House of Commons, March 11, 1840.*

spectors, and how nicely the owners keep them tethered where there is anything wrong to be found out, you will understand matters better than you can do from any description of mine.'

The widow could not gainsay this ; but she felt deeply for the poor young suicide. Here was first a lure spread before her by the mill-owner in the shape of additional wages, for which to barter her very life ; then most culpable encouragement given by the act of the parents in allowing her to appropriate the extra earnings, while they pocketed the fruit of her day-labor—actual encouragement that rendered void whatever they might *say* against the proceeding. Again, there was an evident dereliction of duty on the part of any man who, being employed to correct abuses of this sort, could content himself with the denial of the party most interested in practising a deception, and leave the poor young girl to her fate. 'God be praised,' she mentally ejaculated, 'that all this world's wealth would not tempt my Helen to a lie !'

South, meanwhile, looked vexed and disconcerted ; he saw that his own unnatural conduct had struck his auditor, and he began, as usual, to lament the hardening effect that the system produced on all connected with it ; then proceeded—'Bad as it is to let young people go on all night, if they will just say they are eighteen, and don't look much less, the other two things that our inspectors ought to remedy are worse : working young children over-hours, and ill-treating the poor little laborers. Two of your own grandchildren lie beside my girl in the churchyard from the first ; and Sarah is following them as fast as she can, through the last of these two evils.'

This was bringing the matter home to the widow's present anxieties : she asked what difficulty there could be in obtaining redress under circumstances so glaring, and so easily proved.

'In the first place,' replied South, 'you must remember that twelve hours a-day is the time limited for those *under eighteen* years of age ; with the hours afforded



for meals and schooling, your children going, I think, at half-past five in the morning, finish their day in the mill at seven ?

‘ Yes ; they come home very punctually.’

‘ And you think if they were worked an hour longer than the law allows, you could prove it, and call the owners to account ?’

‘ There could be no want of proofs, when so many must know of the circumstance.’

‘ No : besides which, the owner who worked his mill beyond the proper hours would obtain an advantage over his more honest neighbors, and so make it their interest to watch and report him. The gentlemen in Parliament who think we have already got all we ought to have, lay a great stress on this ; and also say that the lights in the mill, after the regular time, would alone be sufficient to draw attention. For all that, Wright’s children died of overwork, being in a mill where they managed to cheat alike laws, the inspector, and the laborers. First, the time-books were kept so unfairly that they made it look just as they chose ; and you may be sure neither superintendent nor inspector had leisure enough to search out the roguery ; particularly as they took good care to go on correctly for a couple of weeks before the visit ; and whatever had happened beyond that time was out of the reach of punishment. Next, they cheated the children out of their proper hours for meals and schooling, by altering the clock, and other contrivances ; and if they wanted to keep all hands at work half-an-hour, or longer, after regular closing hours, they would loosen a pin or a strap in the morning, stop the machinery for a few minutes to set it right, and then, under shelter of the very act they were breaking, detain them at night to work up lost time.’

‘ But all this might have been told to the superintendent, or inspector, and punished.’

‘ If it happened within fourteen days ; and if any of the laborers thought it worth their while to be turned out of work for complaining, or ill-treated in the mill ever

after: but this did not happen; and the children fell off into galloping consumptions as fast as they could go. The Wrights are a sickly family, and their children could not stand it long.'

'Was Sarah in that mill?'

'No, she was with your friends the Messrs. Z., who pride themselves on being great time-keepers, and never fail to inform against offending neighbors. If an unusual demand comes, they have other means of meeting the emergency without working over-hours.'

'But this watching of one another must certainly be a great hindrance to deceit about time.'

'If children alone are employed, it is: but when the mill is kept going for those who have no protection from the laws, because they are, or say they are, eighteen, many a half-hour is stolen, early and late, without discovery, from the poor little ones. Your young people are still fresh in the work, and have a hearty good-will to it; but wait awhile, and you'll see them come home so fagged and worn out, that half-an-hour will seem more to them, whether for labor or for rest, than half a day used to do. However, I was going to speak of poor Sarah; she was always simple and weak-minded, and all manner of advantages were taken of it, not so much by the children as the overlooker, who happened to be a great rascal; and having some spite against the innocent creature, was always for revenging everybody's faults on her. He would give her orders that she had not the wit to understand properly, and then knock her about for the mistakes that could not but follow. You know, sometimes one has a dislike to some particular individual, even without any real cause: that is the case often in the mills, among the upper work-people, who are wearied and plagued enough, and glad to vent their ill humor where they can do it safely. Wo to the factory child that is in the bad graces of a cross-tempered spinner or overlooker! Sarah, then quite a little one, got a blow from *this fellow*, which hurt her so much that he was sum-

moned for it, and fined: this made him more bitter, though at the same time more cautious how he showed it. I don't suppose it is true, though many say so, that she was sent or pushed into a dangerous part of the machinery on purpose to cripple her; but I do believe that man has to answer to God for all her sufferings. You see she was worked till her ancles bent under her; and if Mrs. Wright was not your daughter, I would say it was an infamous shame to let the child continue going, after she got so weak and ill. However, the machinery settled the matter by pulling off her arm.'

The widow Green felt the blood curdling in her veins as he proceeded. South saw how deadly pale she was becoming, and resumed, 'You need not fear for your own; that brute is no longer in the mill. He was a great favorite with the Messrs. Z., and they promoted him to be a sort of agent; and now I understand he is made a gentleman of, and goes about the country with fine stories, to lure poor people from remote villages into their mills. He is a plausible, smooth-spoken fellow, and does a deal in that way, though his face alone would hang him, without taking into account the cut over his eye, that he got from an adult workman who caught him cruelly beating his girl. The child soon died, and the man was kept in prison, punished, and turned adrift to starve; but though Master Ferris came off with flying colors, he must carry that scar for a remembrance to the grave. But come, Mrs. Green, we'll say no more about it, for you are really getting quite ill.'

This was true; and no wonder. The description of the man had startled her; but the name placed it beyond a doubt. Mr. Stratton had addressed his friend as 'Ferris,' and that name was also written in pencil in the fly-leaf of the fatal pamphlet. She had then been beguiled from her home, and induced to bring her William's children, and poor Helen, into the very same mill, by the identical ruffian who had, in effect, murdered the gentle, harmless *Sarah*, and whose name was associated with so

many dreadful cruelties. In itself, this was nothing wonderful : the poor-law and the factory system had merely played into each other's hands, as they usually do ; and her district being fruitful in laborers, and not very lately canvassed, it is quite natural that the travelling agent should have taken it on his route. Still the coincidence was a shock to her feelings not easily overcome ; and she longed to seek in her poor home the solace that she always found in her Bible and prayer.

South was half grieved to have occasioned so much distress, which he attributed to fear alone ; and by way of reparation said, ' Come, take heart, neighbor, it can not be more than a month or so before the superintendent comes round again, and I will promise you notice, in spite of all the care taken to prevent it, and tell you best how to get at him with any complaint you may have. Meanwhile remember there is nobody in the mill so bad as Ferris now ; and I dare say your children will do well enough.'

The widow thanked him, and departed.

Returning home, with the load of anxious distress and self-condemnation grievously increased, she found her place neat and orderly beyond what it always was, and James in his best clothes, looking well-pleased at his performances in the clearing and cleaning way. ' I thought, granny,' said he, ' that as we are going to have company you would wish things to look nice.'

' What company, my dear ?'

' Mr. Malony, and Katy.'

' I had forgotten : but James, Malony is such a very poor man that we will not make the most of ourselves before him : it would perhaps discourage rather than please him. I will go, before I take off my bonnet, and get a bit of something substantial to nourish them ; for Mary says, you know, they have little to eat.'

With this kind purpose she went out again, and on her return found James in his working dress, still neat and *clean* ; and some little matters that he thought more or-



amental than necessary put out of sight : she also noticed two Bibles placed within reach. 'Oh, my smitten one,' thought the widow, as she fondly kissed his pale cheek, 'how merciful is the affliction that keeps thee alike from the snares of the wicked and the rod of the cruel!'

'Granny,' said the boy, smiling, and pointing to the books, 'you find I am still determined poor Malony *should* see the best we have; and we must make the most of ourselves too, by trying to show him how much happier we are than he can be with such a silly, wicked thing, by way of a religion, as he has got.'

The party from the mill had not long been seated, when a tap at the door was followed by its opening before any one could answer : and the salutation, 'God save all here,' announced the guests. The figure that entered first was that of a tall bony man, whose dress it would be difficult to describe, its principal distinction being the absence of patches, and an abundant call for them. Indeed his ragged appearance cast a slur even on poor Katy in the estimation of James, who was sure that Mary would have sat up all night at the needle, after a day in the mills, rather than see any of them in so dilapidated a condition. Uncombed hair, and beard of some days' growth on a face not over clean, were also a great disadvantage to their proprietor; but in spite of all, there was a look of intelligence, good humor, and unrestraint, with a native courtesy and frankness, that produced an involuntary liking for the poor Irishman.

'You are kindly welcome, Mr. Malony,' said the widow, as she pointed to a chair.

'Thank ye, my lady : the never a one of me would have intruded upon yees, but for the child.'

Katy, clean as soap and water could make her, and glowing with delight, looked archly up in his face, as she leaned on his knee, saying, 'Didn't I tell you it was kindly welcome we'd be; and didn't the lady say that same herself, now?'

'My dear child,' observed the widow, 'there are no

ladies or gentlemen here. We are poor people all, and so must regard each other. Happy are we, if we be among the poor of this world, rich in faith, whom God has chosen to be heirs of his kingdom !

‘By my life,’ ejaculated Malony, ‘but that’s a fine saying—Glory be to God !’

‘What an odd way of talking,’ whispered James to Mary.

‘Oh, let him alone : granny will soon bring him to leave off swearing.’

But the new discoveries, consequent upon this meeting, must be reserved for another chapter.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

AMPLE justice was done to the widow's provisions by Malony, whose craving appetite—one of the concomitants of his distressing malady—rarely found such abundance, accompanied with such kind persuasions to make himself at home. When the meal was over, he drew from his waistcoat-pocket what he called his 'bit of a dudeen,' a very short pipe, and adding another pinch to the contents of its bowl, he helped himself to a cinder from the little grate, and presently enveloped the party in the smoke of his favorite weed. The young people looked on in some consternation; their grandmother not only disapproved of the habit, but also greatly disliked the smell and other effects resulting from it; and Mary was about to remonstrate, when the widow by a sign prevented her. The exquisite happiness that beamed from the really beautiful face of poor little Katy, as she watched her father's returning smiles, induced her to extend even this unusual indulgence; and Malony's felicity was complete.

'By my soul now,' said he, as gradually raising his drooping form he leaned back on his chair, 'but this is the hospitality of ould Ireland itself, come across over the salt say. Sorra such a welcome have I met here, to put the warmth in me cold bones, bairin among my own poor people in it, that has the will but not the power. Long life to you, ma'am!' and he held out his hand and gave the widow's a hearty shake.

‘To the giver of all good we must render our thanks,’ she replied, ‘for any comforts that he enables us to refresh one another with in the way of our pilgrimage.’

‘True for you, ma’am dear; but it’s many years since I went on pilgrimage, and little comfort I found by the way.’

‘Father’s been to Lough Derg, and brought home a blessed crucifix,’ whispered Katy to Mary, who replied aloud, ‘And what is Lough Derg?’

‘Tis the holiest place in all Ireland, my dear,’ said Malony. ‘I went and performed my stations there—didn’t miss one.’

‘And what did you get?’

‘The pardon of all my sins, jewel.’

‘And how did you know they were pardoned?’

‘How did I know, is it? Sure had not I it under his reverence’s own hand? and I came away with my sowl as clean as the smooth of your cheek—by my life I did.’

‘My good friend,’ said the widow mildly, ‘don’t be offended if I remind you that our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded us not to swear at all.’

Malony bent his head very low when the Saviour was named, but looked surprised; and James quickly followed it up by reading from the fifth chapter of St. Matthew the words of our Lord, and then from the epistle of St. James, that apostle’s warning on the same subject. This led to an animated conversation, in the course of which they discovered that so far from Malony taking the Bible for his guide, the poor fellow had never heard of such a book: that he was wholly ignorant of everything relating to the Lord Jesus, excepting the fact of his crucifixion, in reference to which he drew from his bosom a very rude carving in wood, more like a South Sea idol than anything else, in honoring which he evidently considered that he worshipped God; and in bearing it about his person, that he enjoyed the divine presence and protection. It is impossible to describe the astonishment of *the children*, the emotion of Helen, or the anxious dis-



tress of the widow, as this false hope of the dying man gradually became apparent to them. Katy's sparkling eyes were turned eagerly from one countenance to another, as, clinging closer to her poor father, she seemed almost to resent the evident discredit put upon the objects of his faith; while the gentle, affectionate, and even respectful language in which they all addressed him, won her heart in spite of its evident purport. It was plainly James's Bible against Malony's crucifix; and nothing could be more touching than to see the bright gaze of these two—the man and the boy—both far advanced in consumption, fixed, now on each other, now on the respective objects of their earnest but friendly debate. James had truth on his side; he argued plainly, and brought a passage from scripture to confirm every sentiment he uttered: Malony abounded in clever remarks, ready evasions, and a confidence in the power of his church and of his wooden talisman, as unlimited as was that of James in the infallibility of the oracles of God. Every word spoken by the boy was precious to the soul of his grandmother and Helen, for it showed how very deeply he had drank at the fountain of saving knowledge; and this was rendered more conspicuous by the childish simplicity of language in which he clothed the most weighty arguments, and uttered the strongest assertions that triumphant faith could dictate. On the other hand they were surprised at the natural ability and shrewd good sense which lay obscured beneath the rags, the poverty, the ignorance and uncouth phrase of the poor Irishman, who finished the controversy by saying, 'It's a credit you are to them that reared you, ma bouchal; and you've more good words on your side than poor Pat Malony, and he speaking a foreign tongue. Fait, and if 'twas Irish ye spake we'd be more even.'

'What! do you speak Irish?'

'Musha, what else would I spake, and I an Irishman all out?' He uttered this in a sharper tone than he had before used, and stroking Katy's head, addressed her,

fondly in a tongue wholly new and unintelligible to his English friends. Katy responded in the same language, with some earnestness, and her father turning to the widow, said, 'Sure, ma'am, my child loves your little girl with all the veirs of her heart; and why shouldn't she, being that she's the first friend my Katy ever had in them mills.'

This mention of the mills brought back to Mrs. Green's recollection the painful circumstances that she had well nigh forgotten in the deep interest of the sacred subject they had been discussing. She asked Malony whether he had himself been employed in the factories; and learned that he had filled a most laborious office in the engine department, until his health wholly gave way. It had been declining for some time, even before he left Ireland, and of course the change was not likely to prove beneficial to it; but the truth, he said, was, that his wife's death had broken his heart, and the restlessness that came over him made every place disagreeable. He wandered about with his motherless child till at M. he found an opening for giving her some employment, and getting the same himself. 'But now,' he concluded, 'I'd be gone back to my own poor country, to lay my bones under the green grass, and to leave my Katy among them that would give her the biggest half of their last pratee for the love of God and the holy Virgin—let alone the regard they had for her mother and me. It can't be, though: they've got us in a net, and in it we must abide, God help us!'

'What net?' asked Mary.

'Fait, dear, it isn't for simple people like us to deal with them that are above us. I just put Katy in the mill, thinking that I might take her out again on a decent notice; but when I comes to the chap—the agent they call him—what does he but tell me I put her in by the year; and because I didn't take her out at the end of it, here's eleven months of a new one to come, before I can *remove her*. Eleven months,' he deliberately repeated,

opening the collar of his tattered shirt, and showing the skeleton of a neck, 'with not as much flesh on these bones as will stand the wear of three.'

'Be asy, father dear,' said the little girl in a soothing tone; 'your cough is much better, and please God you'll get well and carry me home yet.'

'No, Katy, agra: 'tis among the strangers I'll lie, and the comfort I'll carry to my grave is what I won't see you suffer, when you're without a friend in this wide world.'

Katy involuntarily threw a tearful glance around her, and the appeal was quickly answered, for each had something to say in the way of assurance that she should not be forsaken; and though in the warmth of their feeling, all spoke together, Malony seemed to hear every word, and to feast on it. 'And you won't let her perish,' he said, 'and she a poor orphan?'

'I am a poor orphan,' remarked Helen; 'I lost my parents long before I was as old as Katy, and I had no claim on this dear family: yet you see how God has put it into their hearts to be to me all that I lost.'

Malony looked earnestly at her. 'Blessings on your sweet face,' he exclaimed, 'and bad luck to the brute that could strike you!'

This might have passed for a mere deprecatory wish, had not Helen's color mounted to crimson, while Mary's angry glance, and Katy's eager 'Hush! father,' invested it with a different character. Even James was thrown off his guard by the shock, and his meek countenance kindled with wrathful fire as he repeated, 'Strike! you don't mean to say that anybody has *dared* to strike our Helen!'

Malony looked sadly confused; he saw his error, but how to retract he knew not. The widow seemed perfectly stunned, gazing at Helen, who at length rose, and throwing herself into her arms, said, 'Dearest granny, don't be distressed: it was a trifle, and I hardly feel it now at all. Such things cannot sometimes be helped in a place like the mills. Be satisfied that I did not inten-

tionally deserve a blow ; and that by the grace of God I was enabled to take it patiently, and to forgive. So now, granny, let us forget it too ; for you know the command is, "Forgive *as ye would be forgiven* ;" and the way we wish to be forgiven is that our iniquities may be remembered no more—cast into the depths of the sea. Into the depths of the sea, then, let us cast this little wrong, and never more speak or think about it.'

She said this with such affectionate earnestness, with a brow so unruffled, and a smile so meek, that Malony gazed on her as though she had been a vision. 'By my life !' he abruptly and fiercely exclaimed, 'the villain that could hurt you ought to have his arm chopped off at the shoulder.'

The widow's struggle was over ; the immediate importance of such a practical lesson of Christianity as Helen was giving, forced itself on her mind ; and after fondly embracing the poor girl, she turned to her indignant guest, saying, 'Dear neighbor, we have been a loving and a peaceful family ; and anything like severe usage is quite new to my children. Helen, besides, is of an age when such violence is no less an insult than a wrong ; therefore you cannot wonder that it startled us at first. But we call ourselves the followers of Jesus Christ, and He has said that those who will indeed follow him must take up the cross. Not that cross,' she added, as Malony half drew the little crucifix forth, 'but the cross that our Lord bore when he was despised and afflicted, persecuted and forsaken for our sakes, long before they put him to death. Now you may carry that cross, and wear it about your neck, at the very time you are chopping off, as you say, a man's arm at the shoulder, in revenge for a blow : but we carry the cross by suffering willingly what our dear Master suffered before us, and doing to our enemies what He did to his, when they were nailing him to the tree on which he hung for hours in all the agony of a dreadful death.'

'What did he do to them ?' asked Malony.



‘You shall hear both what they did to him and what he did to them,’ replied James, who had been soothed by a long and earnest whisper from Helen: he took his Bible, and read in a tremulous voice the narrative of our Redeemer’s sufferings, as given by St. Luke. When he came to the words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” he made a full stop, and looked earnestly at Malony.

‘And was that all?’ said the Irishman.

‘That was all the revenge he took on those who tortured and murdered him; but you shall hear what he did to a wicked thief who was put to death at the same time’—he proceeded and finished the chapter.

‘And now,’ said the widow, who saw the intense interest excited in the mind of her poor guest by this sacred history, ‘now let us speak a few words to Him who said and did all this for our salvation.’ They kneeled down immediately; and in most touching language she breathed forth a prayer, suited to the circumstances of all present, especially to those of Helen, Malony and his child. All were in tears, save Willy, who had fallen asleep with his head on the chair, and Katy, who was repeating with all her might, and in an audible whisper, *pater’s*, *aves* and *creeds*; evidently supposing it was the same thing. Not so Malony: he gave his whole attention to what was uttered; and the frequent transit of his coatsleeve across his eyes proved how much entered into the meaning of the petitions. When they rose, Mary exclaimed, ‘Now let us sing;’ and Willy being roused with a gentle rebuke—for the poor child was worn out with fatigue—they all struck up a hymn of praise and gladness to a very cheerful tune, which threw Katy into an ecstasy of delight, and brightened her father’s face with smiles.

‘God be with ye!’ uttered the poor man, as he prepared to go. ‘It’s you that have lightened Pat Malony’s heart of the biggest sorrow within it this blessed night; and I’ve put trouble into yours, but I didn’t mean it, any how.’

‘No, you have not,’ replied the widow. ‘We hope to be able all of us to say with David, “It is good for me to have been afflicted.”’

‘Who is David, ma’am?’

‘There’s a deal about him in my book, Mr. Malony,’ answered James. ‘Come again soon, and I’ll read to you about him.’

‘Long life to you, avourneen! ’Tisn’t a long life may be you’ll have; but ’tis a happy one.’

‘My book makes it so,’ said James: ‘at least it teaches me how to be happy.’

A cordial good-night now passed; and the family were left alone.

‘Don’t be angry, Helen,’ said James; ‘but I do want to know why you were struck.’

Mary undertook to answer the question, and said that Helen had been complaining to her of headache and languor during their walk to the mill, owning that she felt scarcely equal to the day’s work. When there, she had exerted herself greatly; but on being assailed by some rude taunts and ruder insinuations on the part of Phœbe and her abettors, who attributed her evident illness to having drank too much on the preceding night, she had, for the first time, burst into a fit of hysterical crying. This moved some who had never been touched by her patient endurance, and led to a violent quarrel between Phœbe and a lad occasionally employed in that room. The foulest language was given and retorted; and an overlooker passing just then was attracted by the noise they made. He demanded the cause of the riot: Helen was pointed out, and he commanded her instantly to rise from the bench where she had sank, and to resume her employment. This she was unable to do, from the increased agitation that the uproar had thrown her into; and without waiting any farther explanation, the man had struck her severely across the arm and shoulder with one of the rods of the machinery which he had in *his hand*.

‘It was not a *very* hard blow,’ said Helen in a deprecating tone ; ‘and when the people about me saw me struck, some of them interposed, and told the overlooker I was not to blame. A girl fetched me some water to drink, and I was soon able to go back to my employment. I was more sorry to have given way so, than for the pain of the blow ; but indeed I had been feverish all night, and the noise and whirling of the machinery almost took away my senses. So now, James, you have heard all ; and pray do let it drop.’

The request was complied with ; but every bosom swelled with indignation hard to be repressed even by the pleadings of Christian forgiveness : all felt it would have been far easier to overlook such an outrage against their own persons than against their gentle Helen. The widow was thankful that Malony had blundered out what was to have been kept a profound secret from her, though it added tenfold poignancy to another secret, confined in her own bosom—her total failure in seeking redress from the owners, and the consciousness that even in a case of violence like this she should fare no better. She had built too much on the supposed advantage of Mr. Stratton’s introduction and countenance ; she was now painfully undeceived, and obliged to admit the conviction that he was a stranger to the individuals with whose unprincipled tool, Ferris, he had co-operated, for the good of the parish, in sending her to the factories. Her position, therefore, was in no respect better than that of any other friendless poor woman in M., excepting the respectability of appearance and character which she still hoped to maintain, and the far richer distinction of having a sure, though unseen refuge in the day of calamity.

Helen’s arm, which she examined when they were alone, was much swollen and discolored ; and the girl was glad to have the stiffened shoulder-joint relieved by bathing with a lotion : had it been the right arm, she confessed, *it would have been impossible to conceal it, so*

painful was every movement. Seeing the tears escaping from the eyes of her best friend, as she tenderly laved the place, Helen entered on the subject of poor Malony's unaccountable religion, which seemed to her to set common sense utterly at defiance, and then spoke with glowing delight of the part little James had taken. 'Did you observe, granny, how he put down everything the other said, by setting forth the Saviour only? I thought it very beautiful. Indeed it is plain to me that Popery and Jesus Christ are two things like darkness and light—a person may have either, but he cannot have both.'

'Very true, Helen; and the way to drive darkness out is to let the light in.'

'Yes, that was what dear James was trying to do all the while; and it seemed to me as if a little glimmer did now and then fall upon poor Malony. Oh, granny! what ways Satan has of blinding people!'

Thus did the girl beguile the attention of her friend from her own sufferings; and then declaring that the operation had made her arm 'delightfully comfortable,' she went smilingly to rest.

The next few days passed on as usual, Malony dropping in occasionally for half-an-hour to see James, who never failed to interest him with some portion of scripture; till the widow, struck by the increasing attention paid by the poor man, and conscious that he must ere long be disabled from walking so far, resolved that he should, by some means, have at least a new Testament for himself. She inquired whether he would not like Katy to read such a book to him in the evenings and on Sundays.

'Troth, and I would; but Katy can't read.'

'Not read! She has been to school every day for two hours since she entered the mill, for that at least the law compels them to allow! and how is it that she cannot yet read?'

'Sure, I'll ask her that same,' replied Malony, who



seemed never before to have thought on the subject. The widow mentioned it to Mary, who said Katy certainly went to school, but not to the same that she attended. Inquiry being made of Katy, she stated that during school-hours she went to a place where as many children as could stand in it were crowded in a small room; the mistress was an old woman, who kept some of the better dressed near her, and they seemed to be spelling and reading, and some had slates; but she with many other little girls, had never yet been called up to the table, except to receive their certificate; they had a few torn Primers, into which they looked if any person chanced to come in; otherwise, they rested, talked and played among themselves, glad of the relaxation. She had been a year and one month going: in the course of that time the mistress had been changed; but Katy had not yet learned her alphabet.

This appeared too monstrous to be credited: the widow resolved to ascertain the fact; and on the following day she proceeded to the spot, at the hour when Katy usually attended; but had some difficulty in finding it. At length, a narrow alley brought her to the door of a low, filthy-looking house, on entering which she was nearly suffocated by the effluvia exhaling from such a mass of little human beings, most squalid in appearance, and covered with the flue and stains of the mill. At the upper end sat a woman, whose attention seemed riveted on a bonnet to which she was attaching a ribbon, while half a dozen children near her were scrawling on slates. The rest answered Katy's description; for no sooner was a visitor descried by them than a few fragments of books were hastily produced, the noise of promiscuous talking ceased, and a monotonous hum commenced, as if they were learning a lesson, though it was easy to see no two books were opened at the same places, and several of them were held upside down. The sudden sound of this simultaneous hum roused the dame's attention, who, seeing a respectably

dressed person at the door, commenced the exercise of her calling. 'Now, Betty Smith, has you done your copy yet? Show up that ere sum, Sukey. Keep to your spelling down there, till I'm ready for to hear you. Stand on one side, can't ye, and let the lady come in.'

The lady, however, had no wish to advance farther into such an atmosphere; she begged they might not disturb themselves, and then, singling out Katy, requested to know what progress she had made in her learning.

'Let's see, let's see,' responded the school-mistress in a bustling way, 'Kitty—Kitty Malony, Oh, she's been here a precious while afore ever I comed to the school. I s'pose she can write and cipher. Come here, Kitty.'

Several of the children grinned, while poor Katy, with crimson cheeks, shyly approached the seat of authority.

'Come, come, none of your sulks!' said the chief sharply, 'here, take this, and read a bit.'

Katy timidly replied that she could not yet read.

'You lazy warmint!' ejaculated the governess, shaking her by the shoulder, 'is that all, after the perdigious pains I've bestowed on you? Lauk, ma'am,' she continued, addressing the widow, 'them factory girls is the most uncorrigible idlers and dunces you ever see. Here is a few decent children, wot comes to me from private families, and though I don't take half the pains with them, they've ten times more learning nor all the factory girls put together. Come, Sukey, love, read you.'

Miss Sukey sidled up, carefully holding back her frock from coming into contact with Katy's soiled garments, and began to mouth out a lesson; but this being no part of the widow's business, she interrupted the performance: 'I beg pardon, but my visit was to inquire about this little girl: her friends are anxious to have her taught to read.'

'I know of nothing to hinder her,' replied the mistress, sullenly.

Again the widow looked round on the crowded group : some were laughing, some yawning, others dozing and not a few engaged in playing off practical jokes on their neighbors, but nothing resembling the work of education was going on, save in the little circle immediately surrounding the teacher. Suddenly, an old clock in the corner struck ; and such a rush to the door ensued as well nigh upset her. The factory children disappeared in a moment, leaving the others in possession of the apartment.

Having been obliged to step out to make way for the little throng, the widow felt no inclination to re-enter the dwelling. She retraced her steps homeward, and on arriving was surprised to find the rector seated in her arm-chair, James's Bible in his hand, and the boy standing before him, answering questions.

'I called in, Mrs. Green,' he said, 'because I like to visit such of my parishioners as I know are glad to see me ; and I have been pleased, much pleased and highly gratified, to find your grandson so exceedingly well taught in the most important branch of learning.' He spoke with a warmth that touched the poor widow's heart—she replied,

'I humbly trust, sir, he is taught of God.'

'I believe it, indeed : you have a gracious Master, my boy ; go on in the good path, and may He strengthen, establish, settle you !'

Tears stood in the eyes of James, as he turned them on his grandmother, well knowing what a solace she would find in this pastoral visit. The rector resumed, 'Sit down, Mrs. Green, if I am not intruding on your time. How is all with you ?'

The widow replied gratefully ; and then, full of the scene she had just quitted, she described it to him, lamenting the case of the poor little creatures who were so grossly cheated out of the education for which the woman was paid.

'It certainly is one of our great evils,' replied the

clergyman ; ' but how to remedy it we know not. The vast number of children renders many schools necessary ; the act enforces the attendance of each, to be attested by a certificate, or the employer is liable to an information. Some of the mill-owners have established schools on their own ground, which are in the main pretty fairly conducted ; but where this is not the case, the poorer children are obliged to find them where they can, and I am sorry to say the one you have visited is a specimen of a numerous class, where the chief, nay, the only trouble incurred by the nominal teacher is to give bits of paper, certifying the attendance of the child for two hours per day. A few pupils obtained from the families of small tradesmen around pay well, and get what they bargain for : but with respect to our poor little factory people, standing room, or at best a few benches to sit down on, with the privilege of handling some books of the kind you saw, is all they can expect. However, as I remarked, this is only one class, frequented by the most neglected of the children : we have very respectable schools in various parts of the town.'

' But, sir, it is to the most neglected children, to those whose natural friends take no thought for them, and who are exposed to the worst examples at home, that good teaching is of the greatest importance.' The rector made no reply, and she resumed ; ' I have lately heard that the mills are visited by Inspectors, and Superintendents, employed by the government ; are they aware, sir, of this state of things ?'

' Yes ; it has been discovered, reported, and much pressed upon the notice of the Legislature, by some benevolent men who are laboring hard to improve matters among us.'

' And can any Christian man possibly refuse to help in so good a work, sir ?'

' Why, you see, Mrs. Green, all these things were still worse a few years ago : and the alterations made in the laws have been rather unpalatable to the majority



of the mill-owners. They consider it very hard on them to have the number of hours limited, and more so to be compelled to send their infant laborers to school. We cannot expect them all at once heartily to co-operate with the plans of those whom they consider innovators : and of course a great weight of wealth and influence is brought to bear upon the Parliamentary question as to a yet farther amelioration of the condition of the poor in their employment. But,' he added, suddenly checking himself, 'I am talking politics—a thing wholly at variance with my sacred calling.'

The widow thought otherwise ; she thought that any subject in which the glory of God and the welfare of the poor in the land were concerned, was perfectly and especially suited to the interest of a minister of the gospel ; but it was clear the rector had a great dread of committing himself on this point, and that he reined-in many a kind and generous impulse rather than appear to do so. After a pause, he inquired for the other members of the family, particularizing Helen. James moved up to his grandmother, and in an anxious whisper said, 'Do tell him.' The widow hesitated, but after a moment acknowledged that Helen had been hurt in the mill.

'By the machinery?—not dangerously, I hope.'

'No, sir, not dangerously, nor by machinery.'

'It was by the overlooker, sir,' said James, deeply reddening ; 'he struck Helen a cruel blow, and bruised her shoulder.'

'That is sad, very sad indeed,' remarked the rector, knitting his brow. 'I should hope she did not provoke such rough usage by any misconduct?'

'Oh, sir,' replied the boy, 'Helen never did in all her life provoke anybody to say a cross word to her ; he beat her for crying when they taxed her with bad conduct. Oh, if you could only see Helen'—tears stopped his speech.

'Well, my boy, compose yourself. This is a matter

for legal redress ; and though I am the last person to recommend extreme proceedings, yet I must remind you, Mrs. Green, that in cases of wanton cruelty the delinquent should be made to know that the magistrate beareth not the sword in vain.' He spoke this with the air of a man whose best feelings are roused ; but presently resuming a more cautious manner, added, ' Nevertheless it is far better to avoid the recurrence of such an act than to come into collision with superiors. Some who have hastily appealed to the law, have soon wished they had rather taken a wrong patiently.' After a few more kind words, he took his leave ; and the widow gently remonstrated with James for indulging such strong feelings of resentment, where Helen had forcibly represented the duty of perfect forgiveness.

' It is not resentment, granny,' answered the weeping boy, ' at least, not entirely. The gentleman was very kind : and I thought if it ever happened again he would be ready to stand up for us, where we have no friend at all—except God.'

' Well, my love, I am glad it was not from an angry motive you did it. Had the clergyman been long here when I came home ?'

James dried his eyes, and gave her an account of the conversation between them, which made a very favorable impression on her mind. The rector evidently felt more than he wished to express, and she was soothed by that conviction. How prone we are to catch at any visible straw in the hour of distress, and feel more secure in grasping it than when the unseen arm of Omnipotence alone sustains us !

Notwithstanding the cautious wording of the rector's remarks, she saw a depth of evil till then undiscovered, through his admissions respecting the schools. Compelled by a legal enactment to allow their poor little laborers a scanty portion of the day for the purposes of education, what a noble field was opened to the mill-owners for supplying an antidote to the worst evils of

their system ! She thought of Amelia Z. and imagined her, with others like her, devoting two hours of their vacant morning to the sweet and sacred task of superintending the instruction of their young servants in religious and useful knowledge ; shaming vice, overawing insolence, encouraging modesty, industry and cleanliness, by the mere force of their frequent presence and occasional admonitions. A clean, airy room, regular arrangements, a few minutes allowed for thoroughly cleansing their soiled skin and brushing their clothes, with easy, but distinct tasks assigned, and suitable rewards for such as excelled—all under the personal direction of the employer's family : oh, what a refreshment to body and mind would this have secured to the poor little toil-worn creatures ! by what a tie of respectful affection, and consequent diligence and integrity in his service, would it have bound them to their master ! But all seemed perverted, by the demon of avarice, to aggravated evil. Could it be for a moment credited that those who accumulated their wealth by this species of labor were men professing a system of belief, one of the first and most vital articles of which was the certainty that they must each and all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of the deeds done in the body, to Him whose whole volume of inspiration is one continued prohibition of injustice and wrong ? Did they really number themselves among His followers who emphatically reproved those who would have hindered the approach of little children to him, and who perpetually enforced on his disciples a tender concern for their welfare ? Was it not enough to make their poverty a reason for defrauding them of all that childhood demands for its expansion into active, healthful youth ; to imprison them during the sunshiny hours within cheerless walls ; to bid them exchange the refreshing breeze of heaven for exhalations calculated to destroy, not to nourish, their delicate frames, to cramp the limbs that should then know perfect freedom, to overstrain the sinews that should be

oured into bulk and substance, to parch up the juices of which a more abundant supply was required; and while thus effectually poisoning the springs of bodily health and vigor, to leave the mind wholly exposed to the very worst actings of corrupt nature surrounded by every element of matured depravity—was not this enough, without begrudging them a poor two hours of such ordinary culture as might tend to raise them somewhat above the level of the beasts that perish—somewhat above the insensible machinery against which their feeble limbs must toil in an agonizing race? Alas! while the beasts that perish do indeed perish for ever—while the worn-out machinery falls to pieces and exists no more—those little despised slaves have the seal of immortality impressed upon them: they are destined to an eternity of being; and Satan joyfully uses the instrumentality of man's heartless lust of gold to rivet the links of his infernal fetters on their souls, to secure them for his present prey, and with the help of a community of CHRISTIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMEN, to plunge them finally into the gulf "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."



## CHAPTER XIV.

### RURAL SCENES.

THE broad shadow of a venerable oak was gradually lengthening as it lay across a field of pale stubble, beaten down to the smoothness of a grass-plat by the pressure of many feet on its rough but brittle points. The field was large, and its outline traced on three sides by lofty hedge-rows, the land-marks of untold generations, whence at intervals shot up, here the hollow stump of a patriarchal tree, with its few green shoots, the poor remains of pristine vigor, that had once flung many a branch on high, and overshadowed its native soil ; there a vegetable monarch of later date, towering in the majesty of his leafy prime ; and again, mantled in more tender green, the fairy aspirant to future greatness. At their base the hawthorn, the wild brier, the woodbine, and the sloe, spread their berries to the ripening ray, while that ambitious rustic vine, the bramble, forced its dark masses over all opposers, and gave promise of a plentiful crop to the children, who scanned its mellowing treasures, and then peered into the well-beaten nut-trees that formed a background to the picturesque hedge. Beautiful picture ! Other lands may outvie us in many things ; but the rich variety of an old English hedge-row, down from the topmost bough of its tall trees to the tiny flowers that laugh in the long grass below, and the cress that sucks the moisture from a coy rivulet in the scarcely perceptible channel across which a babe may stride—

this variety of form and of tint, of foliage and fruit, defies competition, and marks the hedge-row our own.

I have said that three sides of the field were thus bounded in. The fourth descended with an abrupt slope, its hedge lay too low to intercept the view, and whether by design or not, it was nearly destitute of trees, leaving a prospect open that terminated in the mighty main, which now heaved an unbroken surface of the purest, deepest blue against the horizon. It was on the opposite and higher portion of the field that the oak first mentioned stood ; and the hillock, formed by an accumulation of grass-grown earth upon its enormous roots, afforded to those who reclined on it a full view of this magnificent distance.

But no pensive recluse had on that evening sought the spot for meditation : a large, and to say truth, a noisy party had made it their gathering-place. There might be seen the sun-burnt peasant, bare-headed, or with handkerchief knotted round his brow, in the sweat of which he had tilled the soil, and gathered in the harvest ; there was the sober matron, with clean white cap and ample border, surrounded by a broad riband, her handkerchief neatly pinned over her gown, and confined by the fastenings of a check apron. There was the stout boy, exulting in his promotion to the stronger class of laborers, and the sprightly girl, comparing notes with her fellow-gleaners as to the handfuls of corn collected ; and childhood in all its stages, revelling in the various enjoyments afforded by that annual treat :—it was harvest-home.

There are districts in the land still retaining much of the primitive character of English rusticity—places where the blight has not come ; where the demoralizing swarm of railway excavators has never alighted, nor the firebrand of political rancor scattered its darkening smoke, nor the hell-born reptile of socialism trailed his venomous slime. Sin there is, and sorrow ; folly and remorse ; the spirit that is within us, lusting to envy,

bears many a bitter fruit, and man is rebellious, and God is provoked every day. Still, as compared with the rest of the population, these villagers retain much of what may be called the virtue and simplicity of their forefathers; and like their own hedgerows, bear much that is beautiful to the sight, and good for use, while even the thorns and the poisons that lurk there appear in a less repulsive aspect than in the busier haunts of men. Such was the place whose cottages contributed their inhabitants on the present festive occasion; when the husbandman who with long patience had waited for the precious fruits of the earth, saw them safely built into the stack, or deposited in the barn.

The owner of the field was the principal landed proprietor in this place; and the spot was chosen among many, just because it had, from time immemorial, been the scene of the annual celebration. This year was one of unusual abundance and not a day of adverse weather had thwarted the harvestmen. The Squire was pleased at the diligence with which they had availed themselves of the favorable season; the men were gratified by his praises, and no less by his liberality; while the women and elder children, who had found plentiful employment too upon his extensive lands, had similar causes for gladness. As for the little ones, they were delighted to gambol and exhibit their activity in the presence of the Squire's family, whose daughters took no small pains in disciplining the urchins at their infant school, and marshalling them for an orderly march to the church door. Each, both old and young, enjoyed that peculiar feeling, the value of which the poor are seldom aware of until they experience its absence, 'My employer knows me; I am not in his sight a mere piece of machinery, regarded only while it works in his service. There's a tie between us that he, though a rich man, would not disown. If he is everything to me, I and mine are something to him.' It was this thought, unconsciously cherished, that lighted up every countenance with smiles as the Squire's family

approached the happy groups ; and the bow and the curtsey that respectfully welcomed them were given with greater alacrity under the sense of that individual recognition on the part of their superiors.

And did not God intend that so it should be ? The Bible yields an answer in many various ways, but all in the affirmative : and man's heart cries out against a violation of what he feels to be a law of his nature's God.

A light waggon was now seen slowly winding its way from the direction of the great house, accompanied by the domestics of the family, between whom and the villagers many neighborly greetings took place while the freight was handed out, consisting of good cheer in great variety and abundance, which was soon deposited on the long tables set out in front of the oak, and ample justice rendered to it by the guests. While enjoying themselves they were farther gratified by the approach of one who possessed a full share in their affectionate respect, the village pastor, our old friend Mr. Barlow ; for this was L——, and these were the friends, and such the scenes, which the poor widow had been cheated into exchanging for the wretchedness of the factories.

'Well, Richard,' said the good man, laying his hand on the shoulder of a youth whose sunburnt features beamed with love as he looked up to the speaker, 'well, Richard, you have had a busy time of it.'

'We have, sir, and a beautiful harvest has God sent us : a finer was never gathered in. Do you know, sir, I reckoned the ears upon one stalk, and the grains upon one ear, in different parts of the fields, and you would hardly know how to believe me if I told you the amount.'

'Yes, Richard, I should believe it, for how great is the sum of his mercies ! If we would count them, they are more in number than the sand. I am glad, my dear boy, that you take note of them : you seem to get on very well in your work.'

'Yes, sir ; I am thankful to say I have given satisfaction, and have got my place bettered and my wages



raised. The under-gardener got a hurt, and I took his place for a few days, and owing to what the head-man said of me, the Squire told him to employ me in the gardens to oversee some work in the improvements, and his honor was so good as to tell me he thought he should keep me near the house.'

'That is well; but don't let it draw you into any expensive habits. Servants have greater temptations in that respect than field-laborers.'

'It must be a strong temptation,' said Richard, rather bluntly, 'that would make *me* throw away my earnings.'

The clergyman looked at him, and read in the half-frowning expression of his brow the thought that he well knew nerved that young arm by day, and moulded the nightly dream of the fond boy. Richard continued with a downcast look of abstraction to press the blade of his knife upon the rough table before him, until he had bent it nearly double, when Mr. Barlow, in a lower voice, said, 'How long is it, exactly, since they went, Richard?'

In a moment the brow was smooth, the lip smiled again, and the eyes, softened into the expression of infancy, were once more raised to the inquirer's face, as he replied, 'A year, and two months, sir, and a week, and a few days.'

'What an accurate time-keeper is true love!' thought the minister, but he said it not. Richard continued to read his looks, and resumed, 'The last letter I got did not seem to be written in good spirits—that is, it was merry but not cheerful like. Somehow, sir, it made me laugh, but my heart did not feel warm and comfortable after reading it.' And Richard seemed puzzled how to describe what his auditor perfectly understood.

'Who was it from?'

'From Mary, sir; and it seemed written at different times.' Here the boy again dropped his eyes, and tried the temper of his blade by bending it as before.

'Have a care of that knife, Richard: edged play-

things are dangerous. Go on with your feast ; by and by we will talk more together of the absent.'

'I'd rather talk now, if you please, Mr. Barlow ; I've eaten and drank enough.'

'But others have not ; and I must go round the table : afterwards we will speak together.'

This conversation passed in a low tone, the youth being seated at a corner, which enabled them to discourse with comparative privacy. He was forced to acquiesce ; but more he ate not ; following with frequent and rather impatient glances the slow progress of the pastor among his flock ; and between whiles contemplating in every possible point of view a bunch of honeysuckle that adorned the breast of his open jacket.

In fact, Richard had cause for uneasiness without being well able to explain even to himself what it was. The heavy cost of postage had rendered the interchange of letters very rare ; and such as did pass were of that meagre, formal character generally observable when the parties, having had no practice in epistolary communication, and being accustomed to the unrestrained freedom of daily personal intercourse, feel utterly at a loss to express by the hand what would overflow rapidly enough from the lip, or even the eye. Ripening years, and being thrown upon his isolated exertions, together with the success hitherto attending his diligent progress, had insensibly led Richard into new train of thought as to the future. His present loneliness was but a probation, contentedly submitted to in the fond prospect which, at the end of a vista of toil, seemed to shine in all the sunlight beauty of a young man's dream. A cottage was there, and in that cottage was pictured a group of happy faces, for the originals of which he had only to recal the domestic party recently broken up : and those among his rustic companions who marvelled that Richard Green should be at once the most silent and the most cheerful of their laborious band, knew not how the buoyancy of his animal spirits was sustained by the vivid ima-

ginings of a mind more delicately moulded than those around him.

Mr. Barlow had touched the key-note, at the precise time when all within him was best attuned for a response. The joyous occasion, the loveliness of the landscape, the softening effect of the hour as the broad and beautiful harvest-moon gradually rose from the extreme verge of that ocean belt, and mingled her cool light with the crimson dyes reflected from the western sky—all combined to render the tide of fond recollection and fonder anticipation overpowering. Mr. Barlow's course seemed interminable: Richard would wait no longer. On a sudden, he recollected that every creature belonging to his father's cottage, and its more immediate neighbors, was then present; and following the impulse of the moment he arose, stole away, and by short cuts over the now deserted fields he quickly reached the spot which of late he had rather avoided.

Little alteration had been made in it; and what little there was, the mingled effect of twilight and a luxuriant growth of unaltered trees sufficed to veil. He drew near, not as he was wont, with half averted eyes unwilling to meet the spectacle of its alien inmates, but under the happy consciousness of being wholly alone and unobserved. Throwing his folded arms on the paling, with knee bent on a stone where Willy used to sit to watch the manœuvres of his ducks, and with his temple pressed to the stem of a yellow broom-tree which he had himself trained to ornament the little gate, he fixed an open gaze on the beloved home of his childhood, and gave himself up to visions of the past until it seemed strange that no smiling face had yet looked through the casement, or appeared at the door, to welcome his return. A dog, which had been ranging the fields, now returning to his charge, seemed resolved to compensate for his truancy by the loudness of his menacing bark at the intruder. 'Ah,' sighed Richard, 'I am a stranger now, and anybody's cur may warn me off.' There was bitterness

in the thought, enough to put his pleasant dream to flight. He slowly rose, and measuring himself against a rustic pole to which the linen lines were usually fastened, close by where he stood, the result struck him. 'How tall I am! The Squire has put me among his men, too; and I may as well take a man's heart, and set to work in good earnest to make my way in the world for them.' He turned away, but again looked round: the recollection of the parting night came full upon him—the chapter, the prayer, the stifled anguish of the hour, and the burst of lonely sorrow that had succeeded it, all rose with perfect distinctness to his mind. He clasped his hands, and breathed a fervent supplication for those loved ones now so far distant; and for himself, that he might be made the means of abiding comfort to them. It soothed his excited feelings; and as he slowly paced his homeward path, the wonted evening hymn of the family in harmonious, though subdued and plaintive tones, cheered his solitary way far more effectually than the sprightliest associates could have done.

Richard was a pious youth; but, like the rest of God's children, he had a continual battle to fight with a deceitful heart, a corrupt nature, and an insidious tempter. Immorality in every form he abhorred; and showed his abhorrence by carefully avoiding the company of such as, in that respect, differed from him: but, like Mary, he had much latent pride, a great deal of self-confidence, unknown to himself and unsuspected by others, for his manners were the reverse of forward or assuming; and a sensitiveness amounting to irascibility on points nearly connected with his family respectability or personal independence. Happily for himself and others, none breathed the air of L. who could utter a disparaging or unkind remark concerning the absentees of his household; or it is probable Richard Green would have astonished those who best knew and most loved him.

Nor was the fervency of this attachment to be marvelled at: left, by his father's death, the eldest male in-



habitant of the cottage, the boy, even in early childhood, had learned to acknowledge the claim upon his protection which no truly masculine character can fail to recognize on the part of the more helpless sex. Often had little Richard Green looked admiringly on while the monarch of their small fowl-yard bent a patronizing eye upon the hens and chickens, in whose favor he had relinquished some choice morsel scratched up by his persevering industry from the soil; the call that summoned his feathered protégés to enjoy it never failed to bring Richard also; and with delighted interest did the child contemplate the character which he regarded as his future model.

One day he had confided to Helen his cogitations on the subject, a broken potato being the prize under discussion among the fowls. 'Look,' said he, 'at Strut, what a good fellow he is. The old black hen, you know, is Speck's mother, and the cock was Speck's chicken; so Blackey is Strut's granny and all the tiny chicks belong to his family. Now you see, Helen, how he goes about peeping, and scratching and hunting, and when he finds a nice thing, instead of gobbling it up all alone, he calls them, and looks on better pleased to see them enjoy it than to eat it himself. And then if anybody meddles with the hens or chickens, what a fuss he gets into! We are good friends; he follows me about, and pecks from my hand; but if I catch a fowl, and frighten it, bounce he flies at me, tries to strike with his spurs, and tells me as plain as he can speak he is going to tear my eyes out.'

'It is pretty to see so much love and courage in a poor bird, Richard.'

'I think, Helen, it is love makes him brave, for he will run away on his own account, though he fights on theirs. But I was going to say I will be like Strut when I am a man. I will take care of my granny as he does of his, and of the rest as he does of the chickens. To be sure I have no mother as Strut has; but then I

have you, Helen, and I will take care of you, and give you a big share out of all I can earn.'

With these feelings strengthening and expanding daily in his bosom, Richard Green, now almost a man in age and size, exhibited a specimen of manly English character, such as it will be found where men have not herded together in pursuit of selfish ends until all the finer touches are worn away, and 'every one for himself' becomes the heartless maxim. Would young Green have given credit to anybody who had told him that thousands of delicate little girls were habitually oppressed, overworked, starved, beaten, and that by men, frequently by their own fathers, to swell the gains of their labor? Fathers and elder brothers are very often employed in the mills, as spinners, slobbers, &c., with liberty to engage and to pay the children of their department. They are themselves paid by the piece, consequently, it becomes their interest to have the given work completed in the shortest possible time; and if they have young daughters or little sisters, they of course save or rather gain considerably by employing them: and it is an awful fact, that under the hardening influences of covetousness, or the cravings of wretched want, more barbarous usage awaits the girl at the hand of a father or brother than that of a stranger. No tyranny is so dreadful as domestic tyranny: and he who sacrifices natural affection at the hand of mammon, becomes a monster among God's works.

But of all this Richard Green had no conception: many anxious thoughts would arise to trouble him, concerning those so fondly, so exclusively loved; but nothing resembling the reality had ever crossed his imagination. At times he thought of the shows, the gay shops, the fine people, the lots of company that a town must contain, and the sigh that would escape arose from no desire to share such gratification, but rather from a half-jealous doubt whether they might not wile away *from him* a portion of the only thing he coveted—the

love of that endeared circle. 'People in towns are very polite, and dress smart, and pay compliments,' thought Richard, 'but what is the good of that? Helen used to say she never should see a riband so fine as the rainbow, nor any crowd of people so amusing as the bustling waves of yonder sea, and the birds that dip and paddle among them. No, no, the town won't drive me out of their minds; or if it does a little by day, they will remember me when the Bible is spread open: and put my name foremost in the prayer!'

On the evening above referred to, this tide of thought had set in with more than its wonted force: it occupied him, even till midnight, haunted his dreams, and oppressed his spirit when rising with the lark to pursue his daily toil. It was, therefore, with no small degree of gladness that he received a message from Mr. Barlow, desiring to see him before noon; and with a lighter heart he repaired to the parsonage, assured of being indulged in the subject so precious to him: nor was he mistaken, for the pastor at once entered upon it, making particular inquiries as to the date and contents of his last letter from M., and displayed an anxiety that gradually awoke in Richard's mind a sensation of alarm.

'Have you heard anything about them yourself, sir?' he asked.

Mr. Barlow did not give a direct reply. 'It is natural, Richard, that one who has watched over you all from the cradle, I may say, should feel a little anxious for those who are so far removed; particularly as your dear grandmother is aged, and has passed all her life surrounded by kind neighbors and old friends, who are different from the common acquaintance she may meet with in a large town, where each is too much occupied in pursuing his own interest, amid great competition, to pay much regard to the stranger that is within their gates.'

'But you know, sir, my aunt Wright and her family are there.'

‘True. Has your grandmother written much of them as being affectionate, pious relations?’

Richard was struck, for the first time, with this omission: he looked perplexed and distressed. Mr. Barlow resumed. ‘I would not, my dear lad, have you alarm yourself, but from the general report I have had, and other circumstances, it would be a relief to my mind to know positively what prospects of comfort our absent friends have for the approaching winter. Our letters do not furnish this information, and I have some notion of letting you go and make inquiries. A friend of mine, some miles off, wants to send a trusty messenger to M., on business that you are very well able to transact; he will pay your expenses, and allow you for the loss of time; and last night I got your master’s leave for a week’s absence before you enter upon your new employment. Of course, you are willing to go.’

‘Willing! oh, sir, Mr. Barlow, ever since I can remember, you have been, next to God, the best friend to me and mine; but you never, never in all my life, did me such a kindness as this, sir!’ And he burst into tears.

‘Well, well, my dear boy, I hope it will all be for the best; but it cost me some thought and prayer before I could make up my mind to send you even for such a purpose, into the busy, wicked world of M., and I must have your promise, Richard, your positive promise, that you will not remain there, but come back again within the time specified.’

‘Surely, sir. I go on a message, and I would not deceive or disappoint my employer.’

‘Right: you must also promise not to make any engagement to interfere with your service here. A stout, healthy, active young fellow like you might perhaps find ready employment, and the temptation would be great to remain with your family: but do not yield to it: you would repent when too late having cut off from them the prospect of returning to their native place, which, by God’s



blessing on your industry here, they may be enabled to do. Your master, the squire, is well pleased with you, and means to help you on, if you continue the sober, industrious, steady lad that he now considers you to be.'

Richard cheerfully promised ; and after a few more admonitions he was directed to go to the gentleman whose messenger he was to be ; and while the benevolent pastor resumed his studies, the young peasant sallied forth, glad to give vent to his exuberant joy by bounding along, and leaping over every object in his way. Whatever apprehensions might momentarily have clouded his mind had now vanished in the blaze of rapturous delight at the certain, the near prospect of beholding again all that his heart loved. His fancy pictured the meeting—the delightful evening he should pass, seated around the tea-table with every smiling face turned full towards him, listening to his budget of news. 'Of course,' thought he, 'things will be smarter, and my country jacket will look awkward among the town fashions ; but they wont like me a bit the less for that, certainly. I shall look down upon them ; for the tallest of them must be a head shorter than me—thanks to country air and good hard work,' he added, leaping over a five-barred gate, and giving chace to a playful young colt that bounded away on his sudden appearance.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BENCH OF JUSTICE.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when Richard Green, after thirty-six hours' hard travelling, sprang from the roof of the coach in M., and having shouldered his basket, set off at a rapid pace in quest of the abode on which his thoughts had so long dwelt. To find the street was not difficult; by dint of inquiry he also discovered the obscure lane; but when, after threading for some time the filthy maze, he had forced himself and his basket through the narrow entrance of the court, he felt provoked at having lost so much time, for certainly this could not be the place. However, he mechanically asked if the Widow Green lived there; and was answered by a gesture—a dirty woman, with a pipe in her mouth, pointing up a staircase in a comparatively large but ruinous building. He mounted the stairs, more to get away from the disagreeable-looking people who gathered round, than with any expectation of finding what he sought; and entering a miserable room, the floor of which was clean though broken, and seeing nothing but two heaps of bedding, one half concealed by a curtain, a small table, and two or three chairs, he would have withdrawn, had not a faint voice inquired, 'Who is there?' and at the same moment his eye fell upon a wooden box familiar to his recollection. He stood for a moment in stupid amaze, then let the basket hastily down, which began to feel too heavy, as a faintness came over him, for a death-like face, raised from a

mattress in the corner, met his gaze, and the next instant his name, in a scream of wild joy, broke the stillness of the apartment. He rushed across the room, and sinking on his knees beside the bed, had in a moment the thin arms of James clasped round his neck, while many an endearing expression strove to win a reply, but in vain. Richard could only drop his face upon his brother's pillow, and sob with an anguish of which his heart had never till that moment conceived the existence.

'Now, Richard, darling Richard, do be calm,' cried James, as he stroked back the curls from his brother's burning forehead: 'you will hurt yourself, and you will hurt me,' he added in a tone so plaintive that it recalled Richard to a sense of the injury he was doing the dying boy. He drew back, seated himself on the bed's edge, and holding in his the shrunken hands of his brother, gazed at them and in his face, with the looks of one who has in this world no ray of comfort left.

'You see I am in a weak way,' said James, 'and indeed nobody expected me to hold out so long. I had only one wish left and that was to see your dear face again, and even that was to be granted to me, a wicked sinful boy, by the great mercy of my own blessed Lord. O, Richard, you don't know how happy I am: my sins are forgiven, my pardon's sealed, and I am going to God. What king upon a throne would not change with me? He must give up his crown before long; but I shall receive mine, and once I get it, I can never lose it again. I shall wear it always, Richard, day and night, except when I take it off to cast it down before the throne of the Lamb who was slain, and has redeemed me to God by his blood.'

The silent, yet joyous fervor of the boy's voice and manner, went to his brother's heart. Again Richard kissed his brow, stroked his skeleton hands, and at last said, 'My darling James, I did not expect this. But oh, where are the rest?' and he seemed to dread the reply.

‘They are all out: Willy is at the mill, and granny is gone with Helen and Mary to ——’ he stopped abruptly.

‘To where, Jemmy?’

‘Give me some of that drink, Richard.’ A little toast and water stood on the table, and while James eagerly swallowed some, Richard cried, ‘Stop,’ ran to his hamper, and drew forth a little basket of ripe fruit. Oh, how nice, how sweet, how delicious!’ exclaimed the boy, as the juice refreshed his parched mouth; ‘it is worth a guinea a drop.’ ‘And you might have it for the gathering, if you had only been left to stay at home,’ thought his brother, but he said it not: he only repeated his inquiry for the rest of the party.

‘I will tell you,’ said James: ‘but first, Richard, we must lift up our hearts to God, for some of the comfortable words of his promises. You know he has told us we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven; and that before we reign with Christ we must suffer with him. All this, and a great deal more, we must remember: and also that we are not to fear them which kill the body.’

‘Kill!’

‘Or hurt: even if it went as far as killing, we are safe; but this is not near so bad: not at all like it. You see, Richard, the mill-people are sometimes very cruel: they don’t love God, and how should they love one another? Our Mary provoked them, by taking part with a poor little orphan girl, and certainly she did it in too much anger. She was beaten ——’

‘Who? Mary! who beat Mary? who dared to touch my little Mary?’ and every fibre of Richard’s body quivered with rage.

‘Hush, hush: she was not much hurt, indeed: it was not so much a beating, as the habit of hitting and pushing her about. Granny tried everything, but in vain: at last she got a sight of the superintendent, and *told him all*; and he has brought it into court. They *are now before the magistrates.*’



‘Where is the court?’ said Richard, rising with a look of stern determination.

‘It is not far: but if you go, don’t let them see you. The surprise of it would put everything out of their heads; and justice would not be got, maybe, for want of proper evidence.’

There was too much reason in this to be resisted. Richard acknowledged it, and promised to keep out of sight. Then, after settling the poor boy comfortably, with a supply of fruit and a slice of country cake, he bent his way to the court-house.

Richard had never been present at any kind of trial; filled with a deep reverence for the majesty of English law, his imagination pictured something strikingly solemn and awful in every branch of its administration. He wondered at, while he admired, his grandmother’s resolution, in seeking public redress for an injury inflicted on the helpless orphan committed to her; and he felt as though the family was now to be made the general talk of M. Feelings wholly new to him took possession of his mind, and he scarcely knew how he arrived at the point of his destination—a shaded corner, where he could both see and hear without being exposed to much observation. Several men had chosen the same spot, seemingly more interested than they wished to appear in what was going forward.

On the bench sat some gentlemen variously occupied: one was examining a witness, another making memoranda; a third had a newspaper before him, from which he looked off to take a survey of the court through a fashionable eye-glass. Two were discussing some point that seemed to interest them greatly, and another appeared to be amusing himself with the uncouth phrases in which a poor lad was giving evidence. The witnesses were together, in such a place that Richard could not see them, except when they stepped forth; and the audience was composed of a motley assemblage, whose general characteristic seemed to be want of cleanliness; and who rendered the close room scarcely bearable.

The case then under examination was one of a drunken squabble : it was soon disposed of, and another called on. This consisted of informations laid by the superintendent against a mill-owner for employing children very much under age. ' Now,' said a bystander to his next neighbor just beside Richard, ' now mark how many excuses will be brought forward.'

Richard was marking it all, with an intentness that needed no stimulus. He saw a movement among the gentlemen who were doing nothing on the bench, and also saw an evident desire not to appear interested in what was going on. The first charge produced had for its subject a puny little boy, who was represented to have worked already a year in the mills, under a certificate of being fourteen, whereas he still wanted some months of that age. He had, it was stated, been concealed in various ways on the former visits of the inspectors ; but this time the movement was not quick enough, the superintendent caught him ; and being struck by his very childish appearance, instituted an inquiry, the result of which placed him, and several others, before the court. The book-keeper of the firm produced his volume of certificates, and showed one in the boy's name, signed by the surgeon, and countersigned by a magistrate, declaring him to be of full age at the time of admission. ' Please, sir,' he added, holding the book towards one of the gentlemen on the bench, ' to see whether this counter-signature is not yours.' The gentleman glanced at it, and nodded. ' And here,' pursued the clerk, ' is the doctor, who no doubt will acknowledge his hand-writing.' This was also done.

' We object,' said the attorney for the prosecution, ' that the boy's appearance is so palpably conclusive against his being anything like the age specified, that even if any professional man certified him to be of that age, no mill-owner was justified in receiving the testimony, and employing the child.'

' What !' replied a cunning-looking little man who was

retained by the defendant, 'would my friend recommend us to give the lie to a distinct assertion, verified by a highly honorable professional gentleman, and countersigned by a worthy, upright, administrator of the laws?'

'With regard to the latter,' resumed the adversary, 'it is well known the magistrate does not see the child: he attaches, as a matter of form, his signature to that of the professional man upon whose judgment and veracity he can rely. The magistrate is wholly free from imputation of blame.'

'There now,' said Richard's neighbor, who was no other than South, 'there's an evasion for you. The law, making allowance for possible mistakes, and so forth, on the surgeon's part, provides that a magistrate should also see the child, and if he thinks it all right, then he is to sign too. Instead of that, some dozens of the doctor's certificates are sent to his worship; and he, as his leisure may serve, scribbles his name and sends them back. And you see, so far from getting blamed, his constant neglect of a plain duty is pleaded as an excuse for itself!'

The doctor was now appealed to, and requested to look first at his signature, then at the boy. He admitted that the certificate was certainly his, and that the boy, if so old, was remarkably small of his age: but that he had some positive assurance from his friends, or he should not have passed him.

'This paper,' persisted the accuser, 'declares the boy to be of the *ordinary strength and appearance* of fourteen years.'

'Yes; that is the form supplied by the act, we are limited to one way of expressing it. His parents certainly showed me the baptismal register, or in some way satisfied me of the fact.'

'Where are your parents?' asked the magistrate, *addressing the boy*.

'I don't know, sir.'

'Did they bring you to the doctor to be certified?'

‘ Yes, sir.’

‘ And what has become of them ?’

‘ I don’t know, sir.’

‘ He must be sworn. Boy, do you know the nature of an oath ?’

The wretched child answered by repeating some of the most common and blasphemous modes of execration, which, to Richard’s great horror, drew forth a peal of laughter, some on the bench more than smiling.

‘ Pho !’ said the presiding magistrate, angrily. ‘ Do you know, sir, what will become of those who take a false oath ?’

‘ I have heard some say that it is bad to swear, sir ?’

‘ Do you go to church, and say your prayers ?’

‘ No, sir.’

‘ Do you know anything about God and the Bible ?’

‘ No, sir.’

‘ Go along. Well, gentlemen, we must dismiss this case, I fear. There is a complete break in the evidence, nobody appearing to disprove the doctor’s assertion, which none of us can be inclined to doubt, as to his having had a certificate of baptism shown him by the boy’s parents. Nobody could think of administering an oath to such a little heathen. Call the next case.’

South, with a grin, observed, ‘ Calling the next case is a good way to save time. If he had said, Is any one present who can throw any light on this matter ? I’d have stepped up at once. The boy is even younger than he confesses to, and the doctor at first refused to pass him : but the parents did the usual trick ; they went to a parson and had him baptized, giving just what age they pleased. The parson put it down in the register, and furnished them with a copy. They went again to the doctor, and he being of course too busy to glance at the date of baptism, which would have betrayed the trick, *looked only at the age, and passed the boy. I happen to know he was well thrashed at home for letting the superintendent catch him, and for owning, in his fright,*



that he was so young. You see what good effect the promise of a worse beating has had on him. As to his ignorance, that is no lie. More than a year he has had the *benefit* of the education clause, and he does not know to-day who made him.'

While this explanation, to which Richard could not help listening, was going on, another similar case was disposed of, some technical flaw appearing in the very outset. South remarked, he wondered the superintendent would persist in bringing them forward, seeing how many loop-holes the other party found to creep out at. No more of this class appeared: but a very long string of names was now heard, appended to an accusation of habitually overworking the young children to whom they belonged. Richard was struck with the benevolent interest manifested by the gentlemen on the bench when this was announced: but South's bitter whisper spoiled his gratification. 'Ay, now they're all alive. Working over-hours is too great an advantage to be tolerated in a neighbor; and no doubt some of them informed against him. Self-interest is a capital watchman. But let them prove what they may, the principal offender has two good friends on the bench. The presiding judge is proprietor of an establishment in another town, holding constant dealings with him in the way of trade; and that quiet looking old gentleman, who has said nothing yet, but is now beginning to handle pen and ink, is his own father-in-law.'

'That's a great shame,' said the person addressed.

'Yes: before the amended act, as they call it, came in force, I'll be bound such a case as they're now going to prove, and which I don't think will be even defended, would have stood the accused in two or three hundred pounds. He could not then have had a connexion on the bench; and the lowest penalty was twenty pounds for each offence. Now we shall see.'

Seven children had been selected, and proof the most decisive was given that they had all been cruelly over

worked, by various devices, including that of keeping them hard at their labor during the hours allotted for schooling. No defence was set up: the witnesses gave their evidence, no questions were put, nothing elicited beyond their voluntary statements; and the magistrates having consulted together, their decision was made known with as much brevity as might be. They held the case proven, and adjudged the criminal to pay a fine—the fine of two shillings and sixpence.

South's neighbor was going to speak: 'Hush,' said he, 'there is another charge coming on in behalf of the same complainants.'

This was a charge of having worked the aforesaid seven children without school certificates, thereby defeating the purposes of the act. This also was admitted, and the culprit was fined again to the amount of two shillings and sixpence, over and above that already imposed. The agent, with a smile, laid down two half-crowns, in the name of his employer, and so the matter ended.

'Good,' said South, with his peculiar grin: 'five shillings for seven children worked to the verge of the grave—for this is merely one instance picked out from a year's overwork—and kept in the blessed state of ignorance that helped little Tommy out of his difficulty just now. We shall have a still more curious display by-and-by, when the summons for altering certificates, making false entries, keeping no time-books, and I know not what besides, comes on against the great, wealthy firm of A. But I believe the next on the paper is a charge of ill usage, not affecting the owners, and which the poor old woman Green has been put up to bringing. She will only make bad worse, I'm afraid.'

Richard's agitation, on hearing these words, may be imagined. A cold damp stood on his forehead, and for a moment he felt faint: but his frame, braced by his native sea-breeze and healthful toil, was proof against the united effects of a long journey, excessive emotion, and the yet more trying atmosphere that oppressed his lungs.

He rallied, shifted his place so as to get a more distinct view of the table, and at the same time to be equally near South, whom he now regarded as a sort of friend, from the compassionate manner in which he had spoken of one so dear to him, and also to secure the support of a small pillar round which he twined his arm.

The case came on. John Roy, overlooker to the Messrs. Z., was summoned for various acts of unnecessary severity to Mary Green, one of the factory laborers under his charge, particularly with having, on a certain day, kicked her on the shins, so as to hurt and bruise her considerably. This charge was also brought at the instance of the superintendent: and, having been stated, Mary Green was called to substantiate the facts.

It was only by clinging with a desperate hold to his pillar, that the young brother resisted the magnetic force drawing him to place himself beside the trembling orphan-child, to make her cause his own, and to shelter her in his bosom from the rude stare of the many eyes turned upon her. He did resist it, however, and gazed with anguish on the altered being before him. Emaciated, feeble, poorly clad, and with an expression of care, mingled with something quite foreign to the artless simplicity of little Mary's former face, she stood there, the hectic crimson of her cheek and brow soon giving way to a paleness sadly contrasted with the sun-burnt hue of the village child; and the momentary tremor of her frame succeeded by an air more bold than Richard was prepared to see. He listened breathlessly for the first tones of her happy voice: they too were changed—they were become shrill, and, for her age, almost harsh.

The magistrate inquired of her concerning the nature of the oath she was about to take: Mary answered readily, emphatically, almost proudly, as to her perfect understanding of it. She was then sworn, and deposed to a great deal of persecution, all owing, as she said, to her taking the part of a poor desolate little child, whose father was lately dead. The court abruptly interposed

telling her to confine herself to the facts of the assault recently committed, nothing that had not occurred within fourteen days of the inspector's last visit being admissible in evidence. This sadly curtailed poor Mary's story; for the circumstance took place within half an hour of the limited time, and of course she could only state the bare fact. When called on to exhibit the mark, she replied the discoloration was nearly gone, but the swelling and soreness remained: and the doctor who saw it, and ordered a lotion, could bear witness that it had been a severe blow.

'And who is this doctor?'

She named a person, who, one of the gentlemen observed, was no doctor, but an obscure retail apothecary.

'We are too poor to employ a regular doctor, sir,' said Mary; 'but he promised to come and describe the hurt.'

'He knows his own interest too well for that,' muttered South.

'What witness have you to prove the assault?' said the magistrate to the attorney; who replied that one on whom he chiefly depended had not yet appeared: however he would put forward another in the mean time, whose childish aspect would not, he hoped, be objected to. The accused then began to cross-question Mary.

'On your oath, now, Miss, did you not give me impertinence enough to provoke much more than the push that I accidentally gave you?'

'No,' she replied, firmly, 'I gave you no impertinence; you did not push but kicked me; and it was not by accident, but design.'

'Hey-day! don't look so fierce, or you'll injure your own cause. Have you not been constantly bullying me and everybody else about this Irish beggar whom you affect to patronize?'

'I don't know what you call bullying: I have seen poor little Katy ill-treated among you from the first; and I took her part as well as I could.'



‘Oh, you did. Now please to inform the court in what manner you took her part, if not by railing and blustering?’

Mary was perplexed: she knew very well, but somehow she could not describe how she had taken Katy’s part. No time was allowed her to collect her ideas. The magistrate said it was useless to go into such particulars, as it might naturally be supposed the child was saucy—she looked it—but that did not justify an assault, and he must hear the witnesses.

Mary drew aside, and a diminutive little creature, plump, but appearing not more than nine years old, was put forward. She seemed overwhelmed with terror, and looking round as if for some encouraging face; trembling all over, and evidently ready to sob.

‘How old are you, little one?’

‘Please, sir, I don’t know,’ faltered Katy.

‘And what do you know about an oath?’

The child seemed a little roused by this query, and answered more distinctly, ‘Please your Honor, sir, I know if I tell a lie it will make my Lord God angry with me, and grieve the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ says, “He that telleth lies is of the devil.” I must speak the truth, sir.’

‘One, at any rate, has been well taught in the mills,’ remarked another magistrate.

‘Not a bit, I warrant you,’ whispered South. ‘She learnt it all at the poor widow’s. That child is one of a batch to whom the priest gave certificates of age, in a pious fraud, to support her father, who knew nothing about such things, and did just as the rogues in the place bade him; but listen,’ he added, as Katy, having been sworn, stood more erect and confident, to tell the whole truth in the love and fear of God. The very act of pressing that blessed book to her lips seemed to have revived and refreshed her.

‘Well, now, as shortly as you can, what do you know of this assault?’

Katy detailed the circumstances ; but the discovery of her being Mary's protégé certainly told against her. She was severely cross-examined ; but, instead of flinching under it, her Irish blood seemed to be completely up, and when asked by the accused whether Mary Green was not an impudent huzzy, giving bad language to her superiors, and quarrelling with all around her, she replied in wrath, ' It's yourself that ought to be ashamed to set your two eyes on me, and you just after saying that. Och, but it's a false speaker you are ! '

' Your worships see,' said the overlooker, turning to the bench, ' what meek lambs I have to tend.'

A laugh ran through the court, and Katy, to the astonishment of her judges, said something in Irish.

' Come, what was that?' cried the attorney for the defence, ' I insist on knowing what she said.'

' You must repeat it in English,' observed the bench.

' And I will, your honor. It was the verse of a psalm that my father used to say out of the Irish Bible, when Helen Fleetwood's character was tried to be taken away. The English is, " The lying lips shall be put to silence that cruelly, disdainfully, and spitefully speak against the righteous." '

' Bravo, bravo ! ' murmured South. Then turning to Richard, whose quick breathing had attracted his notice, he added, ' that Helen Fleetwood is one of the best girls alive, but they mauled her reputation in the cursed mill. The child's father was a downright heathen, a wild Irishman, and in a galloping consumption, but those Greens took him in, poor as they were getting, and taught him, and got somebody to read the Irish Bible to him, and, in short, made a Christian of the poor fellow before he died. Isn't that little one a fine specimen of good teaching ? '

But he got no reply beyond a nod. Richard could not have spoken, had the world's welfare been at stake. By this time Katy had been reprimanded and sent down, and a heavy-looking lad was put in her place. He was

sworn, but the testimony that he gave was so confused, so unintelligible, and even contradictory, that they would not hear it. South remarked, the overlooker's presence was enough, that the young fellow was intimidated, and dared not speak truth.

'Go along, sir,' said the magistrate. 'Are we to have no decent witness, out of the many who must have been by?'

None appeared. Some whispering went on at the side for the prosecution, and then Helen Fleetwood was called.

'There, now, look at her,' exclaimed South, pushing Richard's elbow, 'and tell me if any man with a heart in his body could slander or ill-treat that girl.'

Look at her! Richard did look at her until his sight seemed to fail. Could it be Helen? The figure, taller and much slighter, was her's, and the features too were the same; but that deadly white never belonged to her face, nor that prominence to her eyes, nor that stoop to her shoulders. Still less was the fixed impression of sorrow any part of the Helen Fleetwood of Richard's boyish love. Yet the sweetness of her countenance was increased to something almost heavenly; and though the dimple had disappeared from her hollow cheek, a calm smile seemed to hang upon her lip, when, in reply to the usual query, she expressed her belief in the omniscience of God, and her consciousness that in taking an oath she was inviting his especial observance of what she should say. She then modestly, but clearly and distinctly, described the treatment experienced by Mary; and positively denied that she had, on that occasion, provoked it by any intemperate language or improper deportment. She added, that being herself employed in a different room, she should not have been present, but for the circumstance taking place while some machinery was mending.

'This witness has established the point,' said one of the magistrates.

By your leave, sir, I have a question or two to put to her,' said the overlooker, with a malignant leer. 'Turn this way, ma'am, if you please.'

She turned accordingly, and afforded a fuller view to Richard.

'Now be so good as to state in what relationship you stand to the family of this Mary Green.'

'No relationship at all.'

'Oh, you quibble at a word, do you? Well then, barring relationship, how long have you lived with them, and on what terms?'

'I have lived with them ever since I lost my parents; that is, from my infancy; and my circumstances are those of being dependent on their bounty.'

'No, no!' exclaimed a tremulous voice, that went to Richard's heart; but the magistrate cried, 'Silence, there!' and all was still.

'And if they turned you out of doors, where could you go?'

Richard clenched his fist with a movement so sudden and violent that South, who had been watching him for some time, caught his arm, and whispered, 'Be quiet.'

'Where could you go, hey?' repeated the questioner, who had succeeded in momentarily confounding his victim by a supposition so new and so monstrous.

But Helen had a great stock of that inmate dignity which belongs not to birth or station, but to character. She fixed a steady look upon him, and replied, 'If by any dispensation of God I was deprived of my best and only friends on earth, I shall have still one to go to who has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."'

'That is to say, I suppose, you would turn preacher.'

Here a murmur of 'shame!' was distinctly heard; and one of the gentlemen on the bench said, rather warmly, '*Enough of this; it will not shake the clear testimony of the young person before us. You may stand by, Helen*



Fleetwood; and now what witnesses have we for the defence?"

Helen, with a respectful curtsey to the bench, retired; but it was plain, by the flushing of her brow and struggling of her breath, that the acquired strength of the hour was passing away. Richard saw his grandmother press forward to meet and receive her; he saw the aged hands that had fondled his infancy stretched out to clasp those of its dearest companion; and as Helen's head sank on the shoulder of one to whose fond heart the bare suggestion of *turning her out of doors* had been a dagger, Richard burst away, and rushed out of the court.

It was too much like a feverish dream; and occurring after two sleepless nights of travel, it almost overset the boy's reason. He wandered on, careless where, until a name over a shop-door, similar to that of the gentleman to whom he was sent, recalled the primary object of his journey. Sick at heart, but still true to the principle of duty, he seated himself for a few minutes on a low post, recalled his message, and finding on inquiry that the person lived at the opposite end of the town from the poor abode of his own family, he bent his way thither, and delivered his packet. Orders were given him to wait and refresh himself in the kitchen while it was read: and afterwards he was told to call on the morrow for further directions. This left him at liberty, and he lost not a moment in hurrying to what, since it contained all that he loved on earth, he already called his home.

Despite of all that combined to wring their hearts with sorrow, the meeting was most joyful. Apprised by James of his arrival, the delicious task of making preparations to receive him again had animated their bosoms and their looks. James was up, wrapped in a blanket, and seated on a low stool, supported on two sides by an angle of the room, and on the third by the crazy table. The widow, Helen, Mary, Katy, were bustling to no end, and Richard's basket had been plundered without scruple to aid in the preparations. The rush that met him at

the door, the exclamations of welcome and of joy, and of wonder too at his immense growth, and the caresses that even little Katy would bestow, by hugging and kissing one of his hands—all was so much a reality, that he seemed to forget the ugly dream, and laughed through his tears, and was the happiest of all.

What, indeed, is the best of this world's happiness, but a temporary forgetfulness of the trouble to which man is born as the sparks fly upwards!

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FAMILY MEETING.

SCARCELY had the family party settled down into comparative composure, when South made his appearance. Convinced of Richard's identity by what he had seen in the court, he now came to offer him a bed in his house ; saying, that as he knew the visit was unexpected, it would save them some trouble. Richard would have preferred lying on the bare boards under the same roof with those so dear to him ; but a glance round the miserable room, which was too evidently their only apartment, convinced him of its impracticability. He therefore confirmed his grandmother's reluctant but grateful acceptance of the neighborly offer. She was secretly unwilling that he should go to one whose family were far from what she wished, and who would also acquaint him with many things of which she desired him to be kept ignorant ; but no other alternative presented itself, except that of turning him loose to seek a lodging where no young stranger was safe.

South did not stay long : his good feelings, always alive toward this family, overcame the temptation to stop. The highly respectable though rustic appearance of the young peasant had pleased him greatly ; and he longed to show his goodwill as the world delights to show it ; that is, by communicating intelligence nearly concerning those whom he best loved, of the most painful nature, and in a way calculated at once to rouse and to wound his feelings. Not that South loved particularly to gi

pain, but he liked to produce a sensation, and to exhibit his acquaintance with other people's concerns. He lived in idleness, on the profits of his poor children's toil; and as he closed the early grave over the heads of successive victims, he quieted his conscience by keeping up a vehement and continued protest against the evils of which he availed himself. South spoke the truth; he did not exaggerate facts, but he very much weakened their effect on the minds of his hearers, by sharing the spoil. This rendered a new arrival the more welcome, because from a stranger he was less liable to the retort that those better acquainted with him frequently made.

When taking leave of the widow, he observed, 'You must not be too much disheartened at that fellow's acquittal. I knew how it would be all along. The inspector is getting too sharp, and he must be checked, by showing him how little good his interference can do. As for all the spiteful things they said, and the lies they told for the defence, never heed them: it was only to prevent your getting redress, and so encouraging others to seek it. Well, Mr. Green, don't hurry from your friends to-night: come when you like—I shall be glad to see you.'

The momentary dream of enjoyment was now dissipated; the painful reality forced back upon their view, and the effect was felt in a sort of restraint falling on the party. They sat, neither knowing how to break the silence, till Mary began—'so then, you were in the court, Richard.'

'Yes, I was, dear, I went immediately after leaving James.'

'And did you—did you believe the things they said about us at the end?'

'I heard nothing of it: I came away directly after Helen was examined: but I saw there was a great deal of wickedness at work against you. Indeed, I went out *because I could not stand it any longer without speaking my mind to them all*; and I knew that must not be.'

'*You did right, my dear child,*' said the widow.



‘But, granny, tell me two things. What has brought you so low in your circumstances; and why did you not let me and Mr. Barlow know it in time?’ He looked round the room, then in their altered faces, and tears filled his eyes.

‘It would be a long story, Richard, but the story of hundreds upon hundreds whom you meet at every corner in these towns. We have not been dishonest nor idle. Helen, Mary, Willy and Katy, have worked constantly in the mills: James, even now that he is so weak, continues to make little articles for us to sell; and I——her voice faltered, but she instantly recovered it, and in a firm, cheerful tone, continued, ‘I have gone out with tapes and laces, and such like things, and sometimes get a day’s employment at cleaning among the mills. So, Richard, we are all, by God’s mercy, to this hour, independent.’

‘But you seem to have such few comforts.’

‘That is owing to one or another being often ill, and coals and everything so dear last winter. When we had the fever we got help from a loan fund, and have been paying it back. Indeed, only for bad health, we should be very well off, as times go; and that, you know, is what God sees fit to send us.’

‘Ah, but living in such a close, unwholesome place, how can you be well?’

‘The rents are too high everywhere else; we stayed as long as we could in an airy situation.’

‘And you never told me you were ill.’

‘It would only have made you anxious, and perhaps have tempted you to come over and see us, and take the fever too. But now, my dear child, let us speak of God’s mercies to our souls and bodies, and not talk as if we reproached Him who has been so very gracious to us.’

‘Tell him about father,’ said Katy.

The subject seemed to animate them all; each had something to tell: and from their united story it seemed that Malony had become more and more attached to the hearing of God’s Word; and the widow having one da

met with an Irish reader, reasoning out of the scriptures with a poor countryman of his, she brought him to Malony, and to her great joy found that he received the word, in his own tongue, not only with gladness, but with the most cheering evidence of a true and saving faith. 'It was wonderful,' she continued, 'how he caught at passages in the Bible, and retained them in his memory, and feasted upon them, I may say. The reader only stopped two or three weeks in the place, but Malony laid up a store that lasted him to his dying breath.'

'Please, sir,' said Katy, 'father did be saying the Bible to himself all day long. I know it was the Bible, because I read the same in English: and he would make me repeat to him what I heard at church: for father sent me to church too, sir.'

'Ay,' said James; 'do you know, Richard, he would as soon have seen Katy's head off, as let her go to a Protestant church, till one day the priest scolded him for hearing the Bible, and forbade it him. So, directly, Malony, seeing our religion taught us to read the Bible, and his denied it, determined his child should have nothing more to do with Popery. You would not believe scarcely what a work there was when poor little Katy was seen going to church; and when, soon after, she took the fever, the priest told everybody it was a judgment upon her for turning heretic, and that she would die and go to hell.'

'But I didn't die, sir,' said Katy.

'So I see, my little lass,' replied Richard, smiling; 'and I hope you will long live to stand by your friends, as you did this morning.'

Katy looked energetic, replying in a decided tone, 'And I will, sir, please God.'

'The fever,' resumed the widow, 'by laying poor Katy up, deprived Malony of his sole means of support: he *was already helpless, in the last stage of decline*'—she *paused, then added, 'He died in this room, rejoicing in God his Saviour: a more triumphant death I never witnessed'*

‘It was you that did it,’ exclaimed Katy, suddenly rushing up to the old woman, and burying her face in her lap: ‘it was your own blessed self that did it all.’

‘No, my child, it was the Lord that did it.’

‘Ah, but he bid you do it, and you did. Sure didn’t you bring poor father here, and nurse-tend him, and me too, when never the one of us could lift up head or hand to bless you? And didn’t you talk to him, and pray for him, when the heart of you was breaking with all of us sick, and gave us the half of every sup of drink that was little enough for yourselves; and’——

‘Well, well, Katy, whatever we were the means of doing for you, we are well repaid by the love you bear us, and far more by seeing you desirous to walk in the same way that has led your dear father to heaven. And what way is that, Katy?’

‘Jesus Christ is the way, ma’am, and the truth, and the life.’

The turn thus given to the conversation was farther improved by the widow, Helen, and James, until Richard half forgot the sorrows of the road by which they were travelling in the brightness of the prospect before them. It was nothing new to hear his grandmother discourse of eternal realities until they seemed visible to herself and those around; but Helen astonished him by the quiet fervor of her spirit, and the earnestness with which she pressed on him the consideration of those things which she had formerly recommended indeed by her daily walk, but never spoken much about.

‘You see, Richard,’ she remarked, ‘how little we really believe what God tells us; or if we do believe it, how little we desire what he says is best for us; even though the dearest of his people bear witness that they have found it so. God says, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;” and David testifies, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted;” and Paul says, “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him;” and the angel says of those who are before the throne

with white robes, and palms of triumph, "These are they that came out of great tribulation." And yet, with all this before us, how little we like that either ourselves or those belonging to us should bear the yoke, or see affliction !

'I cannot deny that, Helen : if we liked it, it would not be affliction : but there are troubles everywhere, and why not meet them where we have the comfort of dear friends to feel with us, and to encourage us ? Must you come into such a dreadful place as this to look for misery ?'

'We did not come here to seek misery,' said the widow with a sigh, 'and dear Richard knows that : but we have found it here, at least what you consider misery, and with such words to cheer us as our Helen has just quoted, surely we may bless the Lord for the portion he sees good to provide us with.'

'We were too happy at L——,' observed James.

'I don't know what you mean by being too happy,' said Mary. 'Your health was none of the best : we worked hard, and met with troubles enough. To be sure, we had fresh air and sunshine, and green grass to walk on, and flowers to look at, and decent people about us ; and we could really walk about without being run against by drunken men, or hearing people curse and swear at every turn. No doubt, it is much better for us to be where we have none of these indulgences to spoil us ; and where I can be beaten and kicked about, and get no redress ; and where Helen may be set out in public for a drunkard and everything that is bad.'

'Mary ! Mary !' cried the widow sorrowfully, 'to hear you talk in such a way is far worse trial than all the rest.'

Richard was shocked : the expression of his sister's face had already struck him as being much altered for the worse ; but the bitter scorn, the sarcastic levity that swelled in every feature while she uttered these remarks, bespoke a greater change than he was prepared for. The sorrow, too, depicted on the countenances of the rest was unmingled with surprise at what seemed so strange to



him ; and he felt that he must stifle his own regrets to avoid giving encouragement to what sounded too like the language of reproach against their best friend.

‘Dearest granny,’ he said, ‘you must forgive Mary and me too, considering what we cannot help feeling when it was for us that you gave up every comfort, and left your home. We all know you could have stayed, and have been better off than before, only for us. If you would have thrown us on the parish, you might have stocked a nice little shop with the money you had, and got rich by it : but you would not ; you thought by giving up everything that would have cheered your old age at home and coming yourself among strangers, and beginning, I may say, the world anew, when you should have been settling in a comfortable nest to end it in, you would have us all independent and prosperous. You could no more foresee what would happen here, than you could foresee the loss of our lease ; God has ordered it as he saw best ; but don’t blame us if we grieve at what you suffer for us ;’ and while he kissed the tear from her aged cheek, he added, ‘better days may come yet ; for I’ll turn the world upside down, but something shall be done to bring them round.’

‘You are more likely to turn your own head in the attempt,’ said Mary, ‘even if you use the best spade you have.’

Her brother looked sternly at her, and she returned the look with one of sulky defiance : his oblique reproof had failed to reach her heart, and only wounded her pride. She had lately indulged in a habit of indirectly reproaching her grandmother for bringing them there, and Helen for having so long lived upon what, she hinted, would, if laid by, have sufficed to provide another home for them in L. Richard had completely silenced her on the former point, and she longed to take a double revenge on Helen.

*For, alas ! little Mary had gradually yielded to the corrupting influence around her, so far as to stifle the*

pleadings of a better voice within, and to give the rein to an angry temper which when let loose would spare none within its range. She had become a tyrant; and as tyrants are generally cowards, the most helpless was sure to feel its worst effects. She loved Richard; and she might have learned to regard him now with somewhat of salutary fear, but the shortness of his stay prevented such a feeling, while the delight of vindicating her conscious power to distress others even in his presence, deadened the sense not only of affection but of common humanity towards him, who must necessarily be made most unhappy by the discovery. So it is, that one evil passion allowed to prevail can overcome everything good in the character, and spread, like a devouring fire, destruction all around it.

James was the only person who possessed any real influence over her, and he, by reminding her how very soon she must see him confined, sometimes prevailed to calm a rising storm. He now asked her for drink, and while she held it to his lips, whispered, 'Mary, I shall never see dear Richard again: for my sake let all be quiet and happy while he stays.'

'Who wants to hinder it?' she muttered: while her countenance lost some of its bad expression.

Soon after, Willy came in; Richard had asked many times when he would arrive; for he was the pet of his eldest brother, even more than of any one else; and ardently did the youth desire once more to behold 'the little one,' as he was called. Willy entered abruptly, and stood for a moment surprised to see a stranger seated at their poor table; but his brother flew to him, and lifting him in his arms, exclaimed, 'My own Willy! my little darling! how I have longed, and longed to look in your face again!'

The little boy, for he was not even nearly so much grown as Mary or James, stared at him in perplexity; not that he did not know him, but his head was confused, and he could not understand how Richard came there.

On a sudden the latter turned pale, and set him down, but still holding him by the hand he resumed his seat, and placed Willy on his knee. At that moment he met a look of anxious observation from Helen, who, on catching his eye, hastily averted her own, but the glance, short as it was, betrayed too much—it told him her fears that he had detected in the breath of that child the noxious fumes of ardent spirits!

Poor Richard's misery seemed now complete. Of those whom he so fondly loved one was on the very brink of the grave, another evidently beginning to sink, and the remaining two straying in childhood from the paths of peace. His grandmother became almost an object of resentment, because, knowing as she must the state of those committed to her, she looked so calm, so resigned, almost happy. Little could Richard understand of her real feelings: she had struggled until at one time the apathy of despair came over that active spirit, and then it would indeed have wrung his heart to have seen her ghastly looks; and to have heard the tones of her altered voice: but out of this wretched frame she had been delivered by the instrumentality of Helen and James, and now the language of her soul was once more—"It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth him good." Yet at times the conflict within was dreadful, and self-reproach almost overcame her confidence in God, who seemed to be giving her thus to eat of the fruit of her own way; while what had in reality been only an error in judgment, in yielding to a most artfully-concerted plan of deceit, assumed the aspect of wilful, presumptuous sin.

The evening wore away; the beloved Bible was once more opened, and again their voices rose together in prayer and praise; but though the words of their hymn were joyful, the tones breathed forth were sad and tremulous from emotion, for even Mary was overcome by the recollection of past happy hours: as she stood leaning on her brother's shoulder, the better feelings of her nature resumed their sway, and the events that had occurred

since their last parting seemed an uneasy dream that she longed to forget.

With a heavy heart Richard bestowed and received the reluctant 'Good night,' and soon found himself seated in the little close room that South called his parlor, where a bed had been made up for him, while a pot of porter, some bread and cheese, with two plates and two tobacco pipes, bespoke the design of his host to have some conversation with him before he retired to rest.

Apologies having been made for poor accommodation, and warm thanks returned for the kindness shown, they soon entered upon the topic of the morning's meeting. Richard never smoked, and South, in compliment to him, refrained.

'Well, now, Mr. Green, it was strange enough that you should chance to place yourself in the court just beside one who could explain so much of what was going on. I saw you were a stranger, but never suspected you to be of that family, till you got so warm about your sister. Then, to be sure, I saw the likeness, and began to fancy you must be the brother they were always talking about.'

'Indeed, Mr. South, I should have been sore puzzled by some of the things I heard, only for you.'

'And what, may I ask, do you think of the business?'

'I think they have perverted judgment and wronged the fatherless, and robbed the poor, and oppressed the stranger;' replied Richard, making a strong effort to restrain his feelings.

'Ay, they have indeed. Did you hear what passed after you ran out.'

'No.'

'It's just like them, bearing it without a complaint: but nothing could equal the villany practised. You heard the strong evidence of the little Irish girl, and still *clearer proof* by Helen; also the vile attempt to brow-beat them both, which succeeded so ill that we thought *the case was established*; however the other brought up



a swarm of rascally slaves to swear away the characters of your two girls, and to declare that no undue severity had been used to Mary. This, with the absence of two or three who had promised to give evidence for her, but who were kept away by easy methods, turned the balance; and the case was dismissed, with some remarks on the bad spirit of those who could get it up. I was glad you left; for your feelings would have been greatly wounded, especially with regard to that good girl Helen, who was grossly misrepresented. However, I hope you are come to rescue some at least of them from the mills?’

Richard shook his head.

‘Never mind, you may do so by-and-by; and let me tell you, the very lowest employment you could find for them in the country would be better, even in point of respectability, than the best they can get here.’

‘How came they—how came Helen to provoke so much ill-will?’ asked Richard.

‘Through the envious spite of a girl whom I could say a good deal of, only that she’s your cousin. Phœbe Wright hated her for being so different from herself, and began this persecution. She is lately gone off with a regiment of soldiers, and a happy riddance we have of her!’

‘But that proves her to be herself a very bad person, and it ought at least to do away with the effect her ill-word might have before she was found out.’

South looked at him compassionately. ‘You know little of the wickedness of such places if you think a bad person has not more partizans here than a good one. If the worst they ever said of Helen had been true, she would have suffered no ill-will, much less persecution for it: but because her whole conduct gives the lie to her slanderers, and moreover sets them an example just the contrary to what they like to follow, she is hunted down for a hypocrite and false pretender.’

‘*She is not,*’ said Richard, sternly.

‘*Well, I know that; and so do they.*’

Here there was a pause. South presently resumed.

‘It is an ungracious part to act; but you see I have taken an interest in your family ever since they came here; and as you may do something towards mending the condition of one, at least, I can’t help telling you things unpleasant to hear. That little one—Willy—is in bad hands, for all what Mrs. Green thinks, and I wish you’d see to him.’ He then proceeded to tell him that Parkins, to whose care the boy was confided, took no concern in him; and that he feared he was not doing well.

Richard frankly told him he had reason to fear so too; and mentioned the discovery that he had made, adding, ‘only that I can’t persuade myself it is possible.’

‘It is not only too possible, but a common thing among the poor children. Consider what a faint, exhausted state they must be in when coming out of those hot crowded rooms, where they have been confined so many hours, working away at the most fatiguing labor, that strains every muscle of the body without giving wholesome exercise to any: their stomachs qualmish with hunger, or with unwholesome food, made so by the filthy dust and woolly particles, that they cannot help sucking down with every breath: their minds made sickly by conversation as dirty as the place they inhabit; longing for refreshment, but too tired and lazy to seek it in the play natural to their years. I say, Green, consider all this, and then fancy the effect of a dram, warming, and righting, as it were, their uncomfortable stomachs, putting new life, not a real life, I grant you, into their whole bodies, and raising up their spirits into a frolicsome mood that they love to feel them in. Can you wonder that the half-penny is hoarded, begged, ay, stolen, to get the smallest sup of such a luxury?’

Richard’s blood mounted at the word ‘stolen,’ but he said nothing, and South proceeded.

‘I am speaking of the present time, while ’tis yet summer; but now suppose what it is to come out in the

state I have described, and moreover melted with heat, as you will see they are if you look into one of the mills, into the chilling frost of a winter evening, without a rag of additional clothing, and probably knowing there is but a small share of a very poor fire, if any, for them at home; and little enough of bedding to cover their shivering limbs. Don't you see, the gin-shop is a temptation hardly to be resisted even by the careful father of a family, much less by the poor silly child that never troubles its head for a moment about consequences?"

'Nothing but the grace of God can restrain a body in such a case,' observed Richard; 'and that grace is as free to my poor little Willy as to the wisest of men, if he would but seek it.'

This remark was out of South's line. He cut a piece of cheese, and then resumed, 'Your speaking reminds me of what I was first saying. The person your grandmother trusts Willy to is a man reckoned very religious; so she thinks all must needs be right. I don't understand exactly what his notions are, but he seems to say that if a man is not kept from doing wrong by a miracle, nothing else will keep him from it. However, I advise you to see Parkins, and find what sort of a look-out he keeps over your little brother.'

Richard willingly promised to do this; and South volunteered some farther information.

'I must say the conduct of your aunt Wright's family has been very unnatural; but how can you expect people to feel for their more distant relations who care nothing for their very nearest flesh and blood? I dare say you heard of Sarah?'

'Yes; they wrote me that she was much afflicted, said that God seemed to be opening her heart to receive the gospel; but lately they have not mentioned her.'

'No; 'tis a wonder she still lives, if such a state can be called living. Poor thing! her only comfort was in hearing about religion from Helen and the rest; but you may be sure such things could not be pleasant in

place where Miss Phœbe ruled, so they made the very falsehoods they themselves invented of your girls an excuse for not keeping up the acquaintance ; and to gratify a wicked envious spite, they deprived the poor dying creature of the only thing that could lighten her sufferings. I am not a religious man myself, but I can respect it in others ; and I should be sorry not to look forward to the consolations of religion on my death-bed. In these places the poor live like beasts of burden, and so they must be content to die.'

Richard was inclined to ask him what death-bed consolations a man could expect from religion who took no thought about it during his years of life ; but South gave him no time to speak. He entered upon the character of Charles Wright, describing him as the most culpable of all, because he had it in his power fully to contradict the gross untruths of his sister, and to check others younger than himself ; ' but here,' he continued, ' is the great evil : they grow up in the mills from childhood to manhood—that is, the very few among them who live to be men and women—and all the change of character they undergo is from bad to worse ; from being learners of wickedness to being teachers of it. In other situations you may say of a foolish child, " He will know better when he's older," for children, as they grow up, look about them and see that good conduct brings credit and profit, while the contrary leads to disgrace and ruin ; whereas, in these mills, the child sees nothing of the sort ; those about him are all of one class, and they may lie, they may steal, they may drink, they may make themselves no better than the beasts of the earth, so long as they work out their hours of labor, keeping time with the machinery, and don't openly wrong their employer. Indeed, where there is so much wickedness it's more for their comfort to be like the rest : any one trying to *withstand* bad example, and to set a good one, like yon *poor* girl Helen, must expect that if she don't choose *to* *blacken* her mind they'll blacken her name. Such



a rookery of crows can't bear a white dove among them.'

'But surely, Mr. South,' said Richard, who began to feel irritated, 'surely there must be some people out of the thousands you are talking about, not deserving the horrid character you give them. You wouldn't wish me to think all my fellow-creatures devils?'

'Not I. it's only the mill-people I speak of; and if you think me uncharitable, just ask yourself what you would most likely now be if you had been taken out of your bed every day at early morn, and shut up in a close, hot, dirty, unwholesome building, where you'd never have heard a syllable of good advice, but cursing and swearing, and filthy talk from morning till night: then to go home, so tired you had no thought for anything but to sleep as fast as could be, and up again for the same purpose. This to go on from Monday morning to Saturday night, and Sunday the only play-day you had—the only day when you might, by taking a stroll, satisfy yourself that the world is not made entirely of brick and stone—the only—'

'Oh, say no more!' exclaimed Richard, burying his face in his hands. This appeal had reached his heart, and too well convinced him what he dreaded to believe. The conviction flashed upon him of how much the scenes in which he had lived and acted had contributed to form his character. Take away the sunny landscape, the broad fields, carpeted with smiling flowers, the shady banks, the towering trees, the high open canopy of heaven, and the sea—the glorious sea, which with thundering lullaby had hushed him to rest, and whose majestic roar had blended with the sky-lark's morning salutation—take these away, and Richard could only regard the world as a dreary, joyless spot, compared with what he had found it. He also felt how infinitely more efficacious to his soul had been the pious precepts carefully instilled, because of their practical exemplification in the daily walk of his teachers; and with anguish ut

speaking his thoughts reverted to Willy and Mary, as being actually, perhaps irrecoverably entangled in the snare so vividly depicted. South observed the conflict that flushed the youth's forehead, and oppressed his breathing, and sought a little to qualify what he had said.

'Mind, I don't deny that a well-instructed, virtuous child may even stand against all this, with the help of such a watchful friend at home as your young ones have ; but I wanted to prove to you that the wickedness of the factories is not to be charged on the poor laborers, so much as on the vile system that make slaves, not servants, of them. Certainly things have been worse ; but with every improvement they are still what I represent, as the scene I saw this morning may prove to you. There the inspector did all that the law allows ; he searched out for cases of injustice, brought them to as fair a trial as he could obtain, and as it was impossible he should stop to superintend it, he placed the matter in most respectable, honorable hands, and gave every help in his power ; yet you see the result ; and I need not remind you how they baffled him, by intimidating one set of witnesses, brow-beating another, influencing a third, slandering a fourth, perplexing the silly children, quibbling about words, shifting the responsibility from party to party, as in the case of the surgeons' and magistrates' certificates, and finally making sure of a partial decision by putting a near relation on the bench. Self-interest, Green, is a strong feeling in man ; and the laws are to be blamed that leave the mill-owners at liberty to go such lengths where it leads them. Many an honorable, kind-hearted man is drawn away insensibly to do, for his own interest, what he would never think of doing if the fact of its being allowed by the laws, and being done by his neighbors, did not make him look on it as a sort of thing of course—a necessary evil—an act of *injustice done by so many that his refraining from it would only ruin himself, without taking anything worth mentioning from the amount of public harm.*'

‘Now that’s the way I like to put it, Mr. South,’ said Richard. ‘I can’t bear to throw the blame so heavily on my fellow-creatures; and I would rather it rested on the laws that are so bad.’

‘Yes, but the laws don’t make themselves, you know; and we send up members to Parliament on purpose to make good laws for us, or to alter what are bad. This carries the blame beyond the mill-owners. They have, altogether, submitted very well to some alterations that bore hard upon them; and we can’t expect them to throw away what they have always been in the habit of getting, unless obliged by law to do so. I’ll tell you what, Green,’ he added, with a vehemence that surprised his hearer, ‘there are those among us that went such lengths as we ought not, to frighten the government into giving us a Reform Bill, because those that were to get into Parliament by it promised the redress of our heavy grievances; and we got it; and these men took their places in the House accordingly: but now, mind me, young one, while I say—ay, and I’ll swear it on all the books that ever were printed—there never was a body of men brought together that thought so little of their pledges, or cared so little for the poor, or trifled so with the liberties that they had always in their mouths, as this reformed House of Commons. A boroughmongering Parliament passed old Sir Robert Peel’s bill, which is the only real boon ever bestowed on the poor factory laborers; and a reformed Parliament, a reforming government, undid all the best clauses in that bill.’

‘I know no more of politics than a babe unborn,’ said Richard.

‘Very likely; but the time is coming, when every man, woman and child, must know something of politics. They have given us cheap knowledge, because it is as cheap to them as to us; and because they thought if we saw a little farther we should be more willing to put our shoulder to their wheel, and help them forward; but we are looking beyond the point they marked out, and mar-

show them yet that we are not to be bamboozled with fine names, when we want the things themselves that those names signify.'

Richard was perplexed. A degree of excitement had taken place of South's quiet manner, generally dull and heavy, but always dissatisfied. He seemed to have thrown aside his reserve, and exhibited the restless impatience of a man who has something to divulge that he is not quite sure he may speak. He looked earnestly at the youth, and asked, 'How long do you stay here?'

'Only four days.'

South shook his head; 'I fear you'll carry back a heavy heart in your bosom.'

'So I must; I shall never be happy again, as I was before. May the Lord give me grace to cast my burden on him, for I know he can sustain it!'

'You are a good young man; but it's all owing to the way and the place you were brought up in.'

'I am not good, Mr. South. God knows how evil and rebellious a creature I am; and if I have been kept from some of the open sins that others run into, it is owing to his blessing on the good teaching I have had. Do you suppose there is no wickedness in the country, or that some who are carefully reared don't turn out badly at last? We must give the glory to God, and not to man.'

'Well, I don't doubt your being right,' said South, who had resumed his cautious manner, 'but on your own principle you are bound to look after that little brother of yours, who is likely to lose what he has got.'

Richard assured him that such was his intention; and resolving to investigate the matter on the following day, he went to his bed, weary and dejected, to ponder over the occurrences of the day. The sounds that reached him were far, oh! how far, unlike those to which his ear was accustomed; carriages rattling over the stones, the song of the drunkard as he reeled along, and the shout of the brawler as he provoked a fray, church bells chiming the hour, and drowsy watchmen proclaiming it, these and



other unwonted notes kept him starting from the dreamy mood that after a while stole over his senses, until they too seemed to be lost in the confused murmur of distant billows ; and gradually the scenes of his childhood reappeared in visionary beauty, with the forms he so fondly loved engaged in their accustomed rural occupations. Helen and Mary carried their milk-pail along the cliff ; but the sky darkened, the sea rolled in liquid mountains, and threatened to swallow up the coast. Richard must fly to snatch them from danger ; and then followed all the wildly confused imagery of a feverish dream, from which he was awakened by the ringing of a bell, and jumped up to see the rain running down the panes of his window. A great stir was audible, and Richard concluded the factory laborers were summoned by that bell. He was dressed in a moment, and all his accustomed morning devotions being condensed, as it were, in one passionate ejaculation for mercy and help, he rushed into the wet, misty, miserable street, in quest of those whom he had just been looking on through the medium of an exciting dream.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MORE MISERIES.

RICHARD happened to take the right path, and in turning the corner of a street he suddenly met Helen with Mary hastening on. The contrast between those dark, miry, smoky, and now doubly comfortless thoroughfares and the bright cliffs of L——did not to his mind appear so striking or so sad as that between the figures before him and the images so long enshrined in his heart. They were scantily clad, and though the air of neatness that had ever distinguished them was still discernible, particularly in Helen, poverty had set a mark on them that could not be mistaken. The paleness of their cheeks and general emaciation were more visible than on the preceding day; perhaps still farther aggravated by the visions that had haunted Richard's pillow, where they came in the full freshness of their most prosperous days. He had time to observe their wan, dejected looks, before the discovery of his approach brightened them into animation; and with a heart too full to speak, he drew a hand of each through his arm, and turned back with them. Looking down, he was compelled to see how badly their feet were defended from the liquid mire of those filthy streets; and he felt as if the respectability of his own substantial clothing was a reproach to them.

‘Well, Richard,’ said Mary, ‘this is not quite so pleasant as the road to old Buckle’s cow-house.’

‘The weather would make any walk rather unpleasant

just now,' remarked Helen; 'but the path of duty has a sunshine of its own that the clouds cannot darken.'

'So you say; you always try to make out that black is white, and will think it a great virtue to cheat Richard into the notion that we are living in great plenty and comfort. Look here,' added the perverse girl, removing the end of her shawl from a tin jug, 'that's all we have to eat, after working for hours in the mill, and with this wet cold walk to help our appetites.'

'Mary,' exclaimed Helen with a warmth quite unusual to her, 'how *can* you be so cruel to distress your brother in that way, to no purpose?'

'What's the use of deceiving him, I should like to know?'

'None at all,' said Richard, 'but Helen always thinks more of others than herself.'

Mary began, 'If others had not thought'—but at that moment Katy ran up breathless, and by her eager exclamations of pleasure on seeing Richard, and overtaking her companions, interrupted a speech that would have sadly wounded one whom Mary was too much in the habit of obliquely reproaching, and exasperated her brother not a little.

They now approached the mill; the crowd of course thickening by the arrival of laborers from every quarter. Richard was an object of great attention, and the color mounted to his cheeks as he met so many eyes fixed on him in the broad stare of unabashed freedom, or the leer of low cunning and vulgar ridicule, directed more against the girls than himself.

'Is that the lawyer wot you got to fight your battles yesterday?' asked a conceited-looking, dirty young fellow, in a tone of extreme familiarity.

'No,' replied Mary, proudly, and quite audible enough to be heard on all sides, 'this is my brother.'

'Indeed? a fine chap—I spose he's Nell's brother too? returned the other, grinning at Richard in a way that tempted him to inflict chastisement on one who seemed

a suitable object for his undefined feeling of struggling resentment. But the clock struck, and in a moment he found himself, after a great deal of jostling, nearly alone at the entrance of the building.

There was something in this short scene that awakened a pang more bitter than he had yet known. Richard possessed a great share of that honest, manly self-respect which characterizes the Englishman in humble life, wherever his natural spirit is not ground down by the perpetual friction of oppression from above, and contaminating influences around him. It is a fine trait, when combined with modest respect for superiors, and frank goodwill towards equals ; and it embraces, in the bosom of its possessor, not only himself but those who by birth, or other domestic ties, are identified with him. That any female belonging to his household should become mixed up in such a mass of human degradation as he had just seen assembled, that the two most especially claiming his jealous care should be daily exposed to the familiar impertinence and insulting jeers of such beings as the person who had just annoyed him, wounded alike his affection, his delicacy, and his independence. ‘I was reconciled,’ thought the youth, as he slowly left the spot, ‘I was reconciled to this parting chiefly because I was afraid they might be forced to mix with the lowest poor at home ; and well I am punished for my pride ! There’s not a man, or a boy, on all our coast would speak in that manner to them, if they were working by the road-side. Nell, indeed ! I wonder if she can—no, I’m certain sure she cannot like or encourage it. And then Mary ; she’s getting as brazen and unfeeling as can be. Oh, what has my grandmother done in bringing them here !’

Every step that he took increased his disgust : early as it was, the doors of gin-shops were already swinging on their hinges, and many a ghastly, repulsive-looking *being* issued forth, having preferred the morning dram to a loaf of bread. Among them were some so young, that he shuddered when recalling what South had said in



reference to Willy. Towards home he strolled, rather than walked, regardless of the way he took, lost in painful thought; and when arrived he found the widow absent, and no one there but James, who lay in a deep heavy slumber, his Bible above his head on the pillow, and his arm thrown around it. Richard softly seated himself on the bed's edge, and as he hung over the sleeping boy, and gazed on the countenance so beautiful in its death-like expression, the tide of accumulated sorrows broke forth in tears, which fell fast and unrestrained over his unconscious brother.

When James awoke, and stretched out his arm, without opening his eyes, Richard gently touched the burning hand. 'Dear granny,' murmured the boy, 'did you get anything for it? would they take it? I hope'—and unclosing his lids, he stopped short on seeing Richard, to whom his words had conveyed a new and grievous sensation, but which he thought it best to conceal 'What were you saying, darling Jem? you spoke so low—were you asking for granny? I think she is out.'

The boy seemed relieved, hoping that his words had not been understood; then inquired how his brother had slept.

'As well as I expected: Mr. South is very kind.'

'Yes; God gives us what we want, when we want it. A good lodging for you was a comfort to us all. But, Richard, don't hang over me so; my breath is not good for you, particularly fasting.'

Richard bent his head still lower, and with a fresh gush of tears, said, 'I take it more willingly, Jem, because there is death in it. What have I to live for?'

'A great deal, I hope. The Lord is trying us all in a furnace of affliction; you will be made fitter to serve him for some time on earth, and I hope I am going very soon to serve him in heaven.'

'And why may not I wish to go soon as well as you?'

'Because I cannot recover, and my removal will take a burden off the hands of poor granny; but you are

healthy and strong, and may be a help and support to her and the rest. They all want you, particularly Willy, for he minds nobody now, and you may do him good.'

'I am going to-day to see about him at the mill, and inquire of this Mr. Parkins.'

'Do; Mr. Parkins is a good man, but I don't think he looks after Willy. He seems to say that when God pleases to bestow the gift of repentance and faith, all will go right; but till then all must take its own way, and we have nothing to do but to wait.'

'And to work and to watch,' added Richard.

'So I think: but you had better speak to him yourself. Granny does not seem to see what Helen and I cannot help noticing; indeed, she was not by when Mr. Parkins had a long talk with us about Malony; but since we saw poor little Willy so changed for the worse, we could not help being reminded of his opinions.'

'Mary is changed for the worse too.'

'Ah, Richard! if it was not for Helen I should say that the mills are made of pitch—that nobody could touch them and not be defiled; but you never saw such a creature as Helen. She seems to me,' added the boy, raising himself from the pillow, and speaking with energy, 'she seems to me to be sent just to show us that there is no situation where the grace of God is not sufficient for his children, if they do but seek it always. Mary won't seek it, I fear, nor Willy, and so they are getting into many bad ways. As for that poor little thing Katy, she has a natural contentedness about her; a quiet, thankful, obedient child; and so attentive to what is good, that I do hope she is profiting by it. But you never saw such trials as Helen has had to go through. Not only the spite against her, bred by that cruel Phœbe, and kept up for a long time, though it is not nearly so bad now, but sufferings in her health that she never confessed to anybody but me, swellings in her ankles, pains in the chest, giddiness in the head, and fits of low spirits that she used at first to think was the hiding of God's face

from her, and that thought made it worse : but in the midst of one of these sad seasons she heard a beautiful sermon on the text, " My heart and my flesh faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." The preacher showed how the failing of bodily health would cause the mind to droop and be dark ; and how, though the sunshine of gladness might be withdrawn, the bright soft moonlight of quiet faith, and sure trust in Him who cannot deny himself, would lead the traveller on in the safe right path, till the sun rose again, either through the return of health and cheerfulness, or in the bright morning of the resurrection. Helen told me all ; and laughed and cried, and said, " How could I ever doubt !" and since that, if I notice that she looks ill or dejected, she smiles and says, " It is moonlight still." And truly she has been like the moonlight to us through many a dark night.'

The poor boy sunk back exhausted by the earnestness with which he had spoken ; and Richard, in a low voice, asked, ' Is Mary as kind to Helen as she ought to be ?'

' Far from it,' replied James sorrowfully. ' Poor Mary seems to be drawing back, and as Helen always goes forward, it seems as if she was forced to keep comparing herself, and so to see how the distance between them increases. Mary cannot make Helen go wrong : but she seems to try to persuade herself that she does ; and she picks up expressions that go to make out a charge of hypocrisy against Helen, which pains her greatly, because it prevents her good advice from having the effect it ought to have.'

' I thought,' said Richard, striving to speak with great composure, ' that Mary spoke this morning as if she could have reproached Helen—with—' he seemed at a loss for words.

' If it was with what granny has done for her, exclaimed James, reddening, ' then Mary is a most wicked girl ; for we found out her being in the habit of doing so, and got her promise, her solemn promise, never to be guilt

of it again. Indeed, I have lately not liked the way Helen put me off, when I questioned her about Mary's conduct to her. Oh, if it be so, what a cruel, cruel persecution she must feel it.'

'Does not Helen earn more towards supporting the family than Mary?'

'A great deal: and besides that she often works at night, and makes many small things such as I used to do before I became too weak, for granny to sell.'

'And could the rest of you get enough to live on, if Helen and her earnings were both away?'

'No,' replied James, opening wide his brilliant eyes, and fixing them on his brother, as if an agreeable thought had been for the first time suggested to him: 'one-half of Katy's earnings is carefully put by for her, that she may not be destitute if anything happens to granny; and for better security it is paid into the clergyman's hands every week, lest poverty might tempt us to touch it. An Irishwoman, who is a very bigoted Papist, offered to keep Katy for that sum; and though we are sure she could not have fed the child on it, and also that real kind feeling made her propose it, yet as it was Malony's dying request that his little girl might be brought up a Protestant, granny and Helen agreed they would do the same, that it might be seen we did not keep her for the profit of her labor. She costs more, but Helen's industry makes it up.'

'Oh, well, the next time Miss Mary gives her tongue any liberty to hurt Helen, you'll just know how to stop her.'

James did not like the expression of his brother's features as he said this: his tender spirit shrank from severity, even towards an offender; but the widow's entrance prevented his breathing the deprecatory expressions that rose to his lip.

'My dear granny, how wet you are!' cried Richard, as he hastened to untie the dripping bonnet of the old woman. 'Now do take off these soaked things, and make yourself dry and comfortable.'



Alas ! a sufficient change of raiment was no longer at the disposal of the trembling being to whom he spoke. She had been pawning her Sunday gown to procure him a breakfast that would prevent his discovering the wretchedness of the fare to which they were reduced until Saturday should bring in the week's wages of the young laborers. She now put down her purchases, evading Richard's remonstrances on the state of her garments, by telling him that breakfast would do her more good than dry clothes. To this James assented, adding that he was hungry too, and the other, with many painful misgivings, was forced to acquiesce. He announced his intention of visiting Willy's mill, and that the business on which he came would prevent his being home to dinner ; but added that in the evening he hoped to enjoy some happy hours with them all.

A change had come over Richard's feelings that appeared to re-cast his whole character in a different mould. Its latent energy had rarely been roused into any strong manifestation ; he had shown himself the docile, industrious boy, the steady, honest, independent youth, but always quiet and retiring, looking up to others, particularly to his aged relative, for guidance and encouragement ; he now saw his situation and duties in a new light, and at once, almost unconsciously, assumed the headship of the family, feeling his respectability bound up in them, no less than his happiness, and resolved to place them in a different position, both with regard to the world and to each other. How to effect it he had not inquired : but rescue them he would from the low station to which they seemed to have fallen ; Mary must be subdued, Willy reclaimed, and the happy harmony of former days re-established.

This dream of coming conquest lent additional height to Richard's well-grown person, and to his elastic tread *as he crossed the room to take his hat from the remembered box.* The poor widow gazed upon him with looks of admiration, and exclaimed, ' Blessings on our

dear, good pastor, who persuaded me to leave my precious boy in the country! Ah, Richard, if you grow in wisdom as in stature, and in favor with God, who looketh not upon the outward appearance, but on the heart, happy are you. It is like sunshine to me to look on you, my child.'

'Like the real sunshine,' added James smiling, 'that used to look in on us through the woodbine at home; not the shadow of sunshine that contrives to scramble down upon us here, through smoke and mist.'

'Please God you shall see it again, dancing on the little blue waves, and making the wet sands sparkle like bright gold,' said Richard.

'No,' replied James, averting his face to hide the tears of fond remembrance that filled his eyes at this picture. 'No, Richard: in the place that I am going to there is no more sea.'

A fond farewell was now exchanged, and the young man sallied forth, first waiting on the gentleman to whom he had brought the letters, and who detained him so long that before he could reach Willy's factory the dinner-hour had arrived, and the laborers were dispersed at their meals. Parkins' house, however, was very near, and thither he went, expecting to find his little brother, who had permission always to eat his dinner there. In this he was disappointed: Willy was not forthcoming, but Parkins received him very kindly.

After answering a few civil inquiries, Richard opened the business by asking how Willy went on. Parkins replied that he had no particular fault to find with him—he was like the rest of his class and age, occupied with trifles, and bent on amusement when not confined to his work.

'Of course, sir; but I trust you keep a good watch over him, to prevent his going wrong.'

'All who do not go right must go wrong,' answered Parkins; 'and I need not tell you your young brother has not yet been brought into the straight and narrow way.'

‘He has been taught to seek it though,’ said Richard.

‘He cannot discern it,’ persisted the other, ‘unless it be revealed to him of God. Man’s teaching is vain: the best service we can render is to pray continually on his behalf to him who alone can guide the wanderer into the fold.’

‘Then we must wait for a miracle,’ remarked Richard, bluntly.

‘By no means: we set before him the truth, and commend it to him with every persuasive word: and so, using the means, we leave the event to God.’

‘And don’t you correct what is wrong, and enforce what is right?’

‘All is wrong and nothing is right until the person becomes a new creature; for “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” Again, all is right, and nothing is wrong when the change has taken place; for “He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor beheld perverseness in Israel.” Do you not perceive, my young friend, that nothing can be acceptable to God until we be brought to believe? for, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”’

Richard paused: he saw something incorrect in this deduction, but the premises he knew to be just, because they were scriptural. With natural frankness, he answered, ‘I partly agree with you, sir, and partly I don’t. I am a plain country laborer, used to farming; and I find a great deal of instruction in observing the things that I am employed in. God has given a gracious promise that as long as the world endures, seed-time and harvest shall not fail: but seed-time would yield no harvest if we did not sow the seed in its time.’

‘Right; don’t I tell you to do so, by stating the truths of the gospel?’

‘Ay, sir, there we agree: but God has made two other things so necessary to the harvest that all our sowing would not bring it about if they were neglected. First we must break up the ground, turning up the weeds that

naturally cover it thick and deep; and then, sir, we must fence it off. It would not do to dig and prepare a bit of ground in the middle of a common thoroughfare, and sow the seed there, leaving every hoof to trample it, and every stray fowl to gobble it up. It seems to me that the harvest is not a miracle worked in spite of us, but a merciful gift bestowed where we honestly labor for it.'

'You surprise me, young man: you seem to make the growth of religion in the soul a work of the creature, not of the Creator.'

'No, sir; all the creatures that ever lived could not make one grain of wheat to take root downwards or to spring upwards. That is the Lord's doing only: but since he has been pleased to make use of the figure of a field, and sowing, and reaping, and harvesting, in so many parts of his blessed word, I could not do less than take notice as I went along of the way in which it holds good. Perhaps,' added Richard, smiling, 'perhaps you that live among machinery, and see everything done by steam, may take different views.'

The last remark, though made in perfect simplicity, and intended as somewhat apologetic, was not relished by Parkins: he doubted whether he had not a rustic wag to deal with, and resolved to be circumspect; but before he could frame another observation, Willy entered, without seeing his brother, who was seated behind the door. Parkins inquired where he had been.

'Nowhere at all,' answered the boy, pertly.

'That's impossible: you must have been somewhere?'

'May be so,' returned the other, whose manner evidently showed that to be so questioned was no less strange than disagreeable to him.

Richard leaned forward, and grasping his arm, drew him to his knee, while the boy's fist, uplifted in self-defence, fell paralyzed on seeing who his captor was. Doubly excited by what he considered a gross breach of trust on the one part, and by its too evident effects on



the other, he spoke with unwonted force and decision, and with a stern look, no less indignant than animated. 'Willy, I could not have believed, if another person had told me, what I have seen and heard this minute. You have been brought up in the ways of godliness, and taught that your duty before God is, next to himself, to honor those placed in authority over you. You have been bred and treated like a little lamb of the Lord's fold, and often have you been told of the roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. You have been shown the promise that your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and full well you know that without his help you can do nothing. Now answer me, how long ago is it since you last prayed from your own heart for that great gift?'

The boy trembled, and was silent.

'Was it to-day, Willy?' No answer.

'Was it yesterday, or was it last week?'

After a long silence, during which his brother still held him by the arm, and looked steadily in his face, he muttered, 'I don't know when it was.'

'So I feared: and now Willy, who is to keep you from evil, who is to watch over your steps, and save you from the paths that lead to hell? Who is to preserve you from the snares of lying, evil-speaking, swearing, stealing, drinking?' His voice faltered at the last word, and the hand which had roughly held the child's arm, gradually relaxing, now pressed him to the honest bosom that yearned over his helplessness. Willy looked up in his face, and bursting into tears, said, 'I will do anything that *you* bid me, Richard!'

'I can't bid you do anything,' answered Richard, laying his forehead on Willy's shoulder to hide the tears that he too was shedding, 'for my duty keeps me at a distance from you—and, oh, what a sad story I shall have to carry back to our dear teacher, our best friend, good, kind, Mr. Barlow!'

‘Tell him I will be a good boy,’ sobbed Willy.

‘But will you really strive to be so?’

Here Parkins interposed; ‘Mr. Green, don’t delude the child into any notion of his own goodness; he cannot be good unless he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.’

‘I do believe in him,’ said Willy.

‘If you did you would be a new creature.’

‘My farming,’ said Richard, who, having imprinted the kiss of forgiveness on Willy’s tearful cheek, now felt his heart lightened again, ‘my farming, Mr. Parkins, has reminded me often of our Lord’s saying—“First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear;” and I have learned something when stepping carefully to avoid trampling down the tender blade, though it was much unlike a full ripe ear.’—The bell rang, and Parkins took down his hat. Willy clasped his arms round his brother’s neck, and earnestly whispered—‘I will pray to the Lord to make me a clean heart.’ Then running to Parkins, he said, ‘I beg your pardon, sir, for being so rude and disrespectful; but as I had been after no good I didn’t like to be questioned.’ Parkins kindly shook his hand, and said he was glad to see him sensible of his fault; then asked Richard if he would like to see the mill, as he could get him leave of admittance.

Richard declined for the present to enter the building; for he really feared to expose himself to more of Parkins’ discouraging remarks just then. However, he stood for a while under the archway of the gate, through which the children were pouring in. Their extreme youth shocked him no less than their squalid appearance. ‘I wonder how any doctor could find in his heart to give a certificate to such a poor, feeble, sickly-looking babe of a creature as that,’ said he, pointing out a little girl.

‘No medical certificates are required in the silk mills,’ answered Parkins.

‘And are there many of them?’

Not here; but in other towns an immense number?

‘And do they take them everywhere as young as that?’

‘Much younger ; I have seen many in different silk-mills not nearly so big as the smallest you could point to here.’

‘How long do they work?’

‘As much as ten hours a day, often.’

‘But then you reckon the time given them for meals?’

‘No ; I speak only of the time allowed for labor.’

‘Ten hours!’ exclaimed Richard, looking at a group of small children ; ‘ten hours for such little weak things as those—why, it’s more than an honest man would expect from the biggest laborer ; and to my mind it’s a disgrace to a Christian land to work the life-blood out of little children in this way.’

‘Hush, hush,’ interrupted Parkins, ‘you speak too loud.’

‘Is my little brother overworked, sir?’

‘No, really I think not ; he is not in a laborious department, and though often fatigued, as all must be more or less by a full day’s employment, he is not more so than he would be by taking his fill of play in the streets.’

‘True enough,’ remarked Richard. ‘Boys tire themselves with sport if they are left to take their fill of it.’ He looked round him, but though many a little countenance was turned towards him in childish curiosity, he met nothing of the free, laughing, or innocently-sheepish expression that he was accustomed to trace among the villagers. He felt no wish to remain longer, and thanking Parkins for his civility, expressed a hope that he would be watchful over Willy.

‘Certainly ; I was glad to see your remarks produced some effect on him. Remember, however, that the strong man armed will keep his goods in peace till a stronger than he or than us comes upon him. I would caution you against hoping too much from what man can do.’

‘Thank you ; I hope God has also cautioned me against presuming too much, and so neglecting the means of doing good. I cannot deliver my brother, Mr.

Parkins, it is true ; but I can see to it that his blood does not lie at my door. Good bye, sir ;' and he left the mill.

Having eaten a piece of coarse bread, in order to say that he had dined, Richard proceeded to make some purchases of tea and other little comforts for the party at home, bitterly regretting that he had not brought a hamper of provisions from L. Painful doubts crossed his mind as to the extent of suffering endured by his family, but he strove to disbelieve what it was so grievous to contemplate. While strolling along, he met with South, who invited him to go and sit down in a public-house : but Richard pleaded his promise given to Mr. Barlow, that unless in a case of actual necessity he would not enter a place where drinking was habitually carried on.

' Well, then, we can walk together,' said South ; ' I wonder how long it will be before our parsons take so much trouble to keep their young men out of harm's way.'

' There are too many for them to look after,' observed Richard.

' Ay, that's one of the blessings of an over-populous place. Not that it signifies much ; for the quiet way in which the clergy look on while the poor are destroyed around them, shows how little they care about them, bodies or souls.' Then, after a pause, he added, ' To be sure they can do nothing except in the pulpit ; and it would be an easier matter to preach all the mill-owners out of church than to preach one unjust and cruel principle out of the factory system. Do you remember, Green, the case tried yesterday, where children were overworked, and without school certificates ?'

' Yes, I do.'

' Well, this morning, I happened to be in the office of that very firm, and heard most strict orders given to shut *the door* in the superintendent's face whenever he came *there* ; never, on any pretence, to let him enter that mill *again*.'



‘But surely he can insist upon it.’

‘No; the inspector can, but not the superintendent, and considering how seldom he comes, how short his stay must be, and how many ways there are of baffling his inquiries, there is little fear of his giving any trouble, except where the superintendent has been before him to direct his notice; so you see that for the small sum of five shillings in which the parties were fined, they have purchased a security against all future molestation; this prosecution giving an excuse for excluding the troublesome investigators.’

‘Why this looks like a mockery of protection,’ said Richard.

‘So it is; and to make the matter worse, the poor children who were the cause of it are turned out to starve.’

‘I only wish they may turn out Mary and Helen,’ remarked Richard.

‘You had better wish no such thing; work is rather slack now; and depend upon it they would be kept out of employment for a long while, having appeared as complainants in open court. It is well they failed. Have you been to Parkins?’

‘Yes, and near the silk mill, where they are working babes as I would not work a plough-horse.’

‘Nice infant schools, arn’t they? and if you could hear some of the lessons taught and learned by creatures no higher than your knee, you would know more of the value of the factory system.’

‘I could not hate it more than I do,’ said Richard.

‘Yes, you would; a religious young man like you, believing that the wicked shall be turned into hell, would be terribly shocked at seeing the whole process of making young sinners ready for perdition in the next world, while hurrying them out of this.’

Richard made no answer; the irritability of his feeling increased, and he had learned to watch against the rising storm, and to keep silence when disposed to speak

intemperately. Besides, South was not one to whom he could unburden his mind. That person's information was evidently correct, and his remarks just: but they were uttered in a bad spirit. South was himself a specimen of the fruit produced by this evil tree. His health was injured by personal labor, yet not so much but that he might have turned to good account the remaining energies of the body, wherein dwelt an acute and vigorous mind; but that mind had been perverted, rendered at once morbidly sensitive as to theory, and selfishly callous as to practice, in the matter that incessantly occupied it. He passed his time in denouncing the factory-system, and even built upon it doctrines subversive of every good principle as a British subject; but at the same time he purchased the leisure thus misapplied at the price of abandoning all his children to the horrors he so forcibly pictured and so eloquently deplored. This conscious inconsistency added gall to his bitterness, and while it led many right-minded persons to stand aloof from him, it increased his influence among a party who valued their leaders according to their power of exciting the angry passions.

Richard was not sorry to part from his companion at the next turning, and hastened to the house so overclouded with sadness to his affectionate spirit.

During the evening, while enjoying a temporary forgetfulness of present distresses in the delightful retrospection of former times, the little party was disturbed by the abrupt entrance of a person who seemed welcome to none, and whose presence excited an emotion of angry surprise in Richard's bosom, when he recognized the conceited-looking little man who had addressed Mary in the morning with so offensively familiar an allusion to Helen. He never raised his hat from its studied position on one side of his head, but lounging in with an awkward shuffle, threw himself into a chair, stretched out his legs, and with a patronizing nod asked, 'How are you all?'

The widow's distressed look, James' trepidation, and Helen's flush of evident displeasure, added to his own hostile sensations, tempted Richard to assume a very authoritative air, as he surveyed the intruder, who looked up at him with an expression of curiosity mingled with contempt, saying, 'So this, I suppose, is the renowned Richard, of whom we have heard so much; a tall feller enough. How old may he be?'

This roused the young countryman completely. He sprang to his feet, but was arrested and confounded by hearing the other resume,—'Well, grandmother, I came by mother's desire to tell you how sorry she is ——'

The widow hastily interrupted him,—'Tis of no consequence, Charles; pray tell her not to think of it.'

'Oh, we know better. It must be of some consequence to you to have a strapping chap like that come upon you with a country appetite, and nothing for him to eat. Mother would lend you the half-crown if she could spare it just now, but she's some bargains to make. However,' he added pompously, 'I b'lieve I can let you have a shilling without much inconvenience,' and he drew out a tawdry purse, whistling the while.

'I do not want it,' said the widow, warmly, 'I thank you, but really don't want it.'

'O, nonsense! you wouldn't have come out so late at night to borrow it, if you hadn't wanted it. Besides, I think I'll make you a present of it, for the sake of those pretty rogues,' looking at the girls, as he laid down the piece of money before the widow, and again nodding, bustled out.

Richard could not stand this; he seized the money, and was about to hurl it after the insulting donor, when Helen caught his arm, and Katy, nimbly jumping on a chair, snatched it suddenly from him, and darted out at the door, before any one could speak.

Richard turned, and fixing on the agitated widow a look of almost angry reproach, exclaimed, 'Oh, granny, *now* could you, how could you expose us to this?'

‘It was to her own daughter she went,’ said James, ‘and how could granny suppose she would be so cruel as to publish it to that malicious Charles?’

‘Granny could expect no better,’ observed Mary, ‘from all she knew of aunt Wright; but beggars mustn’t be choosers.’

‘Beggars!’ repeated Richard.

‘If Katy is gone to lay it out for us, ——’ commenced James, who seemed roused beyond his strength, but Mary interrupted him, ‘Never fear; she has a spirit worth two of that; she’s more likely to throw it in his face.’

The little girl re-entered, glowing and panting, her eyes sparkling with satisfaction, while Richard eagerly exclaimed, ‘Well, Katy, did you overtake him?’

‘Sure and I did, sir; and I caught him by the coat-tail, and there being plenty of people to the face, I said, Mr. Charles, said I, here’s a shilling for you. What do I want with it, you little Irish blackguard? says he. Sure, an’t you heartily welcome to it then, says I; and I dropped it right into his coat-pocket, and ran away through the people, and they laughing. Och, but it’s mad he was!’

‘Served him right,’ said James. ‘If he had done it with a kind feeling, we ought to have overlooked the manner of it; but he came to insult our poverty, and expose us before Richard.’

‘Yes,’ said his brother, bitterly, ‘Richard is a stranger now, it seems, and must be kept in the dark as to your concerns, unless others choose to inform him of them. Oh, I did not expect this!’ He laid his head on his arms, and trembled with the mental agony that overpowered him.

None had courage to speak. They felt that any farther attempt at concealment was vain, but to pierce *that loving heart* with the tale of their deep distress was *a task that none could undertake*. At this junction Willy, *who always came in later than the rest*, entered, and



seeing his brother in such evident distress, ran to him, throwing his arms around his neck, and exclaiming,

‘Richard, I will be good, indeed I will, and never grieve you any more. Oh,’ he continued, seeing tears escape over the coat sleeve, ‘Oh, how sorry I am to have made you unhappy! Won’t you speak to me, Richard, your own poor little Willy that you used to love so dearly?’

Richard clasped him to his bosom, and for some moments all wept in silence together.

Mary first spoke: ‘It’s no use keeping up any pretence now, granny; so let him know all. He won’t love us the less, and perhaps some of us may be the better for a little humbling.’

‘All of us, I hope,’ said James.

‘No; the rest of you don’t need it. I meant myself, for you are none of you proud and hard-hearted like me.’

‘Mary,’ said Richard, drawing her to him, ‘it almost consoles me for all that can happen to hear you speak so.’

With these softening circumstances to stay the rough wind in the day of the east wind, Richard listened quietly to the sad tale of disasters and privations which, but for the spiteful proceedings of Charles Wright, would have been withheld from him. Still there was a partial concealment; past, rather than present difficulties, formed the subject of what was told: and he was left to conclude that no farther pressure of actual want was likely to fall upon the objects of his fond and anxious sympathy.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### EFFORTS FOR RELIEF.

WHEN, on the following day, Richard Green repaired to the gentleman on whose business he came, the latter, struck by the dejection of his countenance, inquired whether he was ill. Richard answered, that he was better in body than in mind: and on being kindly encouraged, owned that he had suffered a grievous disappointment in finding that the factory labor, for which his family had given up the healthful employments of the country, was so very different a thing from what they expected to find it. Of pecuniary distress he said nothing; but expatiated on the ruinous severity of the toil, and the demoralizing tendency of their habits. To all this his hearer most feelingly assented, and told him that he was busily engaged in forwarding the objects of those who sought to obtain legislatorial redress for the crying evils so generally felt. This was a joyful surprise to poor Richard, and with eager delight he accepted a ticket that was to admit him to a select meeting of the laborers, about to assemble for the consideration and adoption of future plans. 'So, then,' thought Richard, as he left the house with a lighter heart than he had felt for two days, 'so, then, after all, there is some good stirring. I wonder why South did not tell me of this.'

Full of anxious expectation, he repaired to the place of meeting; and found about twenty men assembled, *principally* of the appearance of artizans, but with one or two from a higher class in society. An air of seriousness pervaded the assemblage, and the general aspect of

the men bespoke the quiet determination that is not soon turned from its purpose. Several bore the marks of bodily injury sustained in the factories, some were much stunted in growth, and there was not one among them who would in the country have been called a healthy-looking person. They were earnest but calm, and the curiosity that Richard's appearance evidently gave rise to was unmingled with rudeness or suspicion.

A well-dressed respectable-looking man, seated at a table, with a pile of papers before him, invited the stranger to approach, and after looking at his ticket, observed, "You got this from our good friend Mr. H., and that is sufficient introduction; but perhaps you will be kind enough to tell us what led you to join us; you don't look like one who has been in the mills."

Richard felt a little abashed, but summoning resolution, replied, 'True, sir, I never wrought in a factory; my labor, through God's mercy, has been in the country; but those that are dearer to me than my life are in the mills, and suffering enough to make me feel it more than if it was myself.'

'Surely,' said one of the men, 'I saw you in the court, taking a great interest in the case of poor little Mary Green.'

'Well I might,' answered Richard, casting down his eyes as the recollection overcame him

'Are you related to her?'

'I am her brother.'

A dwarfish, but most intelligent-looking man now held out his hand, saying, 'Mr. Green, I honor you and every member of your family, for the part you have acted by that precious girl Helen Fleetwood. If ever there was a persecuted Christian enabled by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of the foolish, and to shame them of the contrary part, she is such a one.'

Richard grasped the friendly hand as though it had been the richest of earth's treasures; but emotion kept him silent.

‘Now,’ said the president, ‘I proceed to read the last letters from our deputation in London, that we may determine what steps to take next.’

The document that he unfolded was long, and very interesting. It stated that the writer had been closely examined before the Committee of the House of Commons; that every important fact had been fairly elicited by the chairman and other friends to the cause, while all possible pains were taken by some on the other side to draw from him a contradiction of some part of his testimony, or to put a different aspect on the truths stated. He had afterwards been present in the gallery to hear a debate on the subject, where, he said, several of their friends spoke out with great force and feeling. They were met by hot and angry speeches on the part of some whom he named; cool denial from others; and one gentleman had ventured upon such a misrepresentation of the whole concern as would not be believed in that or any other factory town to have passed the lips of a person so well acquainted with the case. ‘Generally,’ he wrote, ‘the matter was not taken up by such members as were personally most interested in it, but by others, who seemed to have got a completely wrong notion of the whole thing instilled into them. The worst part of the case was, the very great indifference shown by the House; many went out as soon as the subject was started; some folded their arms and fell asleep; others kept up conversations, often rising loud enough to drown the voices of the speakers: while pamphlets and newspapers were being handed about, and consultations held on all sorts of subjects. Lord Ashley—’

Here a general murmur of voices, rising at last to a hearty cheer, interrupted the reader: he paused till the burst of feeling had its way, then said, ‘God bless him!’ ‘Amen,’ was the unanimous response, and he resumed.

‘Lord Ashley, though he seemed grieved and hurt at *all this*, was neither daunted nor discouraged. He got



up and gave them a lesson, both on our claims and their duties, that will not soon be forgotten by any honest man who heard it. It did me good to look at him, and to think how much better than all the rank and all the wealth in the world is the blessing that belongs to him, pleading as he does the cause of the poor, and persevering in striving that those who are in need and necessity have right. Ay, striving against such difficulties as nobody can estimate or understand without seeing it. We used to think that what thwarts him is a hot opposition in the House of Commons. No such thing; it is like pleading with the deaf or preaching to the dead. Give him an adversary, and he can grapple with him; but who can grapple with a painted picture of a man that stares out of a frame, without having either senses, or substance, or reality of any sort? This is just what the gentlemen become when our case is brought forward. Mr. O'Connell —.

Here another interruption took place, of a character remarkably dissimilar from the former. The reader smiled, and resumed,

'Mr. O'Connell took vast pains not to hear what was said. He had a roll of papers in his hand, and untied them for the benefit of some red-whiskered gentleman near him. Whether they were money drafts or instructions I don't know, but I know what I thought of when I looked from Lord Ashley to him, and back again to Lord Ashley.'

The writer went on to state some of the misrepresentations that had been made, requesting to have a person sent up who could, on oath, from his own knowledge, disprove them.

'Here,' said the president, folding a letter, 'is our difficulty; we cannot rouse a manly feeling in the legislature on behalf of the oppressed children of poverty. If the lukewarm, indifferent people were away, and the battle to be fairly fought between those who are in earnest, we should soon see a good result' but this indifference leaves

men so open to the arts of interested individuals, who, if they cannot give them a false view of the matter, so as to make them active opponents, easily persuade them it is a thing of no consequence, a mere waste of public time, the whim of a few sentimental dreamers. The liberal party, and more particularly those at the head of affairs, who could carry it at once if they chose, are liberal enough of fair words, but deeds we seek in vain ; and the great liberator has sold us, almost in the open market, into a renewed, and for aught he cares, a perpetual period of hopeless bondage. We cannot change the course of this under-current ; all we can do is to go on forwarding to our friends such plain, honest facts as can be proved in the face of day, and praying to God to strengthen the hands of our generous advocates.'

They proceeded to discuss the merits of different persons whom it was proposed to send up ; and Richard, meanwhile, entered into conversation with his new friend.

'It does not seem as if you had much to expect,' he sorrowfully observed.

'No ; but we use the means, and look to God for the blessing that he can give when he sees good. It is an awful proof of the power of Satan, that such statements should be laid, year after year, before upwards of six hundred gentlemen, chosen to represent the whole body of the people, and to watch over the country's interests, and yet no effectual redress be given. I say effectual, because some bills have been passed, and some improvements made : but at the same time clauses in the old acts, that afforded great protection, have been expunged, and very grievous alterations made. You saw two instances in court. You saw what a mere farce the fine can be reduced to on the most aggravated charges ; where formerly ten or twenty pounds was the lowest that could have been imposed on such a conviction ; and, moreover, every separate offence was formerly visited with a fine, whereas now only one can be recovered for any particular day. You also saw, what probably you were not aware

of, a near relation of the offender sitting to judge the cause.'

'Yes, I was told of it by a friend—one Mr. South.'

The other looked at him for a moment with less cordiality; then said, 'Have you been long intimate with South?'

'No; I sleep at his house, and that's all.'

'Then let me, as a Christian man, caution you of a danger you may not be aware of. South is loud in his complaints of what we all suffer from; but the remedy that he seeks is even worse than the disease, I fear——'

He paused, and Richard said, 'You may speak freely to me. I'm no tale-bearer; and to tell you the truth I didn't half like South's way of talking.'

'Then be on your guard; for I greatly fear that he is involved in political plans that would not bear daylight. Some men who long to overturn all right government have come among us and endeavored to make our grievances a pretext for engaging in rebellious schemes. This we never can do; those of us at least who know right from wrong, who fear God, and desire to be found in the path of duty, however hard, knowing that the way of transgressors is much harder. Still, from the deplorable ignorance of those brought up in the mills, there are multitudes ready to listen eagerly to such suggestions; and it is too probable that the cruel neglect of the British Government as concerns those employed in the manufactories, to which her commercial prosperity is mainly owing, will yet recoil on themselves in some terrible outbreak, aided by those who are made desperate by oppression, and utterly careless as to future consequences, because they have been left in ignorance and unbelief.'

'Thank you for putting me on my guard. I confess I sometimes feel as if I could take vengeance on those who have brought my family to such a state, but it is only the sinful thought of a moment. However, it might be taken advantage of by anybody who observed it. I will watch and pray.'

The other took his hand: 'Green, the lesson you have

learned in your young years, and which you are now called on to put in practice, will become more valuable to you every day. Evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse, as the scriptures have foretold; and the knowledge that is so boasted of is only making men more skilful in mischief, or puffing them up with the false pride that comes before a fall. I look about and see all this: I look within myself and understand it. In my heart I find the seed of every evil thing, and I know that it is only by the grace of God working in me that I am not constantly following a multitude to do evil. If I ceased to watch, as you say, and to pray, I should directly fall. How then can I wonder to see others, in their different ranks and stations, betrayed into bad courses, when they never think of applying to God for help against the devices of their invisible enemy? If the rulers of England and her great men knew the value of what is now being given over to Satan and his tools, they would endeavor to stop the mischief by imparting religious instruction proportioned to the great increase of the demand for it. But I fear they regard us only as machines, while making a great show of raising us in the scale of knowledge; and so they are loading, as it were to the muzzle, a gun that will burst and destroy them.'

'I think,' said Richard, 'that South is such a man: he seems to have a deal of learning for one in his station; but I should be tempted to fear he would better like to revenge himself than to see what is wrong quietly set right.'

'We must not be too ready to judge others,' answered his new acquaintance, 'but it is our duty to observe and to take warning, and to look to our own ways when we see our fellows slide. I always find South and some others ready enough to dwell upon the grievances we suffer; but when I propose the peaceable, legal way of trying to get them redressed, they fall back, with some excuse or other, generally pointing to the small benefit we have yet got by our efforts, and saying the evil is too great to be remedied by means so tame.'



‘And you are expecting to see the success of your endeavors?’ asked Richard.

‘I hope it may please God, before long, to rouse the feelings of our fellow-countrymen on behalf of the poor children employed in these mills. If that was done, we should soon see a change for the better. Now suppose a lady, the mother of a young family, looking upon her own children and thinking what she would feel if they were situated like the wretched little ones in the factories,—or suppose another, employed in teaching or overseeing a nice school of girls, and comparing their comforts and advantages with what our little laborers want, and what they suffer,—don’t you think these ladies would use their influence over their own husbands, fathers, brothers and friends, to make it a point with the candidate they vote for, that he should support our cause in the Parliament? You see, it is no party matter at all; whig or tory, conservative or radical, any man may assist our noble champion Lord Ashley, without interfering with his general politics, or offending the party he belongs to. And, alas, Green, men seem to think much more of being consistent in their party support than in doing what is acceptable before God! We see no obstacle to having a large majority with us, if the country would but take up our distressed situation.’

‘There is another thing,’ said Richard. ‘You know a vast number of the voters that send members to Parliament are men in humble life. In the farming districts, and such places as I come from, it is so: and I suppose in towns the small shop-keepers and trades-people have a good deal to do in turning the poll where there is a contest.’

‘Certainly: and what do you infer from it?’

‘Why, the gentlefolk have a power of interest among those people, and might use it with such good effect as to make it worth any candidate’s while to let it be known he would do his best to help the cause of the poor factory children. And why don’t they do it?’

‘For want of being rightly informed upon the subject You see, the facts are brought before Parliament, by having witnesses up to be examined on oath before the committee ; these reports, as they are called, are printed, and sold too : but, Green, I don’t think one lady in a thousand ever looks into them, to say nothing of other classes : and if they are not read, how can the statements be known ? What we chiefly want is to have some public information given about it, such as will be read, and may stir up the hearts of God’s servants to succor us. We want neither their gold nor their silver,’ he added, with energy, ‘we want nothing that would lessen their wealth or encroach on their time. All we want is, that they should secure to us a fair share in the blessings of the English constitution, by making a right use of their own privileges. As we have shown, they can all, more or less, bring an influence to bear on the House of Commons ; and that has the power of righting all that is wrong and oppressive among their poor country-people.’

He paused : his raised voice had attracted the notice of the president, who remarked, ‘True, Hudson ; and that is one great object of our meetings here. Many good works are going on through the land ; and the time may not be far off when a call will be heard for more information respecting the factory children, by those who know how to draw public attention to any cause they wish to promote. It is not long since, that I happened to be at a meeting called by some ladies who wanted to forward the education of children in some very distant heathen land : it was a new thing, and excited curiosity. The room was full : some gentlemen came forward ; read descriptions, commented on the miserable state, both bodily and spiritual, of those children, proposed resolutions, established a society, and made a collection for the express purpose of spreading those facts, and extending that appeal through the land. I listened with interest, and cheerfully gave my mite : but a sadness was on my mind as I thought, ‘The children of your own people, the lit-

the neighbors of your own houses, are in as bad a plight as these distant heathen babes ; and would not He whose eye is alike on both equally bless an effort that should do good at home ?” I did not desire to see the benefit withheld from the others, God forbid ! but I thought of the words, “ These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.” ”

A murmur of assent ran through the room, and Hudson remarked to Richard, ‘ Oh, that we had a few of those Christian ladies to take the hard case of our factory little ones into their kind and zealous hands ! ’

‘ It is no more than one might expect from them,’ he returned, ‘ considering how well it becomes them to care for poor little friendless children.’

The business of the meeting being over, Richard walked homewards, in company with his new acquaintance, to whom he remarked, ‘ I cannot but say this has been the best thing I have yet met with in M. Still you seem to be getting on but slowly in your good work ; and meanwhile what is to become of those belonging to us who are suffering all these miseries ? ’

Hudson shook his head : ‘ That is a question which God alone can supply an answer to. I know how anxious you must feel, and how slow the progress must appear which can bring little, if any relief to those you love. But we have no remedy—no help. As to myself, I am employed in a situation that has no great hardship belonging to it, after fighting my way through all the troubles that beset a fellow who tries to serve God according to his conscience. For myself, I have now no complaint to make.’

‘ And you have no family ? ’

‘ None : none belonging to me now.’ He sighed heavily, and added, ‘ Once I had ties, even dearer than yours, for I was a husband, and, in anticipation, a father too. I began in the mills very young, and when labor was more severe, because less limited than it now is. A twin sister, dearer to me than my life, entered at the

same time; but she soon died of consumption. After some years, I met, in the same line of labor, with a young person of whom it is enough to say that Helen Fleetwood constantly reminds me of her, both in manners and mind. The seed of divine truth had taken root in my spirit very early; and I do not think I was allowed to disgrace such profession of religion as a young lad could make in a mill. Similarity of feeling, under the same trials and the same consolations, drew us together: we waited long, that I might, by an appointment which was promised me, be better able to maintain my dear Martha in a respectable home. I got the situation, and we were married; but not without many warnings from our friends that, through the injurious effect of factory labor, she would never live to be a mother. We were content to leave that to God; and one year of the purest domestic peace and happiness I enjoyed, only damped by the uneasy apprehension with which we could not but look forward to the birth of an expected little one. The hour came; and I was left, after a day and night of torturing suspense, to kneel beside the bodies of the dead mother and her dead babe.'

Richard was too much moved to utter a word of sympathy: he put his arm through Hudson's as they walked, and its friendly pressure alone bespoke his feelings.

'It was all right,' resumed Hudson; 'she expected it, and meekly waited for the summons. Indeed, her joy was great at times; but the thought of leaving me bereft of my only earthly treasure afflicted her. Well, I had not built my house on the sand; and even such a storm as this failed to move it. Since then, I have devoted myself to two objects: one is that for which you found us assembled: the other is the instruction of children, so far as my means will go, and opportunities can be found, in the way that I know to be the way of pleasantness, and which my precious Martha found even to the last mortal gasp to be the path of peace.'

'What a murdering business this mill-work is!' ex-



claimed Richard. Then, abruptly, he asked, 'Do you think it will kill Helen?'

Hudson seemed unwilling to reply; but when urged, he said, 'Not being in the same mill, nor much acquainted with the family, I have not such good opportunities of judging how they are affected by it. Helen teaches a class in my Sunday-school, and I hear a great deal of her from others, who witness her patient continuance in well doing under much opposition and persecution.'

'But from what you do see, how should you guess, as to the effect on her health?'

'Not favorably, I confess: I see the weakness of the ankles, the narrowness, so to speak, of the frame, a stoop, and a quickness of breathing, together with the increasing paleness of her complexion.'

'Would not country air, and exercise, and the way of living she was used to, cure it all?'

'It might,' said Hudson, hesitatingly.

'Mary does not seem to suffer much, if at all.'

'Not in bodily health.'

'Ah, I know what you mean.'

Then a silence ensued; till Richard asked if he knew Parkins, Hudson answering that he did.

'Is he a good man?'

'He is; but he holds some doctrines good in themselves, which, carried to the extreme he goes to, have an effect not favorable to Christian watchfulness.'

'So I feared: my grandmother placed my little brother under his care, and he seems to have left him pretty much to chance.'

'No, not that: but probably he has put off doing anything till God begins openly to work in him. Parkins seems to forget that while waiting for a fair wind, all should be put in readiness to make the most of it. But how is this? I thought your brother was unable to go out.'

'I have two: now come home with me, and see them all, for you are just the person we want to set us on a

little. Neither Smith nor Parkins, nor anybody they seem to know, is like the friends we had at L.; you alone resemble them.'

Hudson willingly accompanied the warm-hearted youth, and was received with a hearty welcome. Helen, after bestowing her share of it, said, 'Granny, this is the person I told you of, who stood my friend more than once, by speaking kindly of me to the overlookers, when others did differently.'

'And this is the person,' said Mary, 'who has made me hold my tongue when nobody else could.' Her glance towards Helen, and the latter's benevolent smile, indicated that Mary's volubility had been directed against her.

'And this is the person,' added James, 'whom of all the people in M. I have most wished to know.'

'Then why, my dear boy, did you not send for me?'

'Because your time was better employed: you are always teaching those that know nothing, and I only wanted you to come and remind me of what I have been mercifully taught already.'

Katy, meanwhile, stood blushing and brightening, evidently the best pleased of all. She peeped up in his face, as he patted her head, saying, 'It's you are the gentleman that taught me to take pains and learn fast, that I might be a help and a comfort to them. And when they were sick'—here Hudson interrupted her suddenly, 'Well, Katy, you certainly took a friend's advice in good part, and learned your book remarkably well. And do you continue to learn from it? Do you love the blessed Bible, my little maid?'

'I do, sir.'

With a swelling heart Richard contemplated the group, rejoicing that he had found at last one individual able to influence the whole party, and sure to influence them for good. The conversation immediately took a turn most congenial to the Christian mind; and they were *discoursing* on the sweets of that rest which remaineth for

the people of God, in the spirit of those whose way through the wilderness is both sharp and steep, and who can therefore appreciate the promised country, when Helen, half rising from her chair, fell back fainting. 'All was alarm and agitation: restoratives were applied, such as they could command, but the fit continued, and as the darkening hue of death seemed to gather round her lips, and its damps to ooze from her clay-cold hands, Mary exclaimed, 'She never was so far gone or for so long before. Oh, Helen, look up! don't leave us!' and she burst out into a passion of crying.

'Before!' repeated the widow; 'has this happened before?'

'Often and often, ma'am,' answered Katy, mournfully.

'She has fell down on the heaps of cotton, and laid there like as father when he was dead.'

'And I was never told!' exclaimed the old woman indignantly, as she chafed the hollow temples on which her tears fell. 'My poor lamb, you have indeed been among those who had no pity!'

'She almost swore us not to tell,' sobbed Mary, 'and they say it is such a common thing in Helen's room, owing to its being the hottest and most fatiguing of all, that nobody minds it. We only hear of it from others; except two or three times I happened to be near her.'

Symptoms of returning life now appeared; and Hudson, who had stood in silent sorrow contemplating the scene, drew Richard away, saying, 'The more air, and the less excitement she has, the better: so come, take a turn down in the court with me.'

No sooner were they fairly out of hearing than the youth, with a violence that startled his companion, exclaimed, 'They shan't murder her—I say they shan't! And now I swear by all'—

'Green! Green!' cried Hudson, in a tone so loud and authoritative, that it checked him at once; 'what advantage are you going to give the devil now? Will you add swearing to wrath? Come, recollect yourself, my

dear fellow, and remember in whose hands are the keys of death and of hell—remember who openeth and no man can shut; who shutteth, and no man can open: remember by whom the very hairs of her head are numbered.'

'You did right to stop me,' faltered Richard, 'I see the folly and wickedness of angering my only Friend. But these things set me mad. Only think of their letting her faint, and faint, day after day, and never even tell my grandmother—never get her a little absence allowed to recover her strength!'

'I tell you plainly, my friend,' said Hudson, 'no absence would be permitted on the ground of what is so very common in the mills, and occasions so short an interruption of work. Distressing as it was to witness, I felt it less than you would suppose, from sheer habit.'

'Then you don't think it a dangerous sign?'

'I did not say that.'

'What, then, on this earth can I do?'

'I'll tell you. We will set ourselves to work to find out a change of employment for her. I have known it produce good effects. Some of the rooms are cooler than others. The Messrs. Z. will not listen, I fear, or rather their overlooker, to any proposal for improving her condition where she is; but the gentleman who sent you to our meeting has interest enough to get her into a far more comfortable mill; and we must prevail on him to interfere.'

'Now, all the blessings!'—and Richard's emotion was so great he could not finish the sentence but by clasping Hudson's hand and raising his tearful eyes to heaven.

'Thank you, my friend, I know your heart's desire for me, and it is sweet to have an interest in each other's prayers. I feel for you in more ways than one, Richard: you regard Helen with something beyond a brother's affection, and no wonder.'

'I'm too young to think of marrying, if that's what you mean,' said the lad with manly frankness; 'but I dare



say you are right. By the feel that came over me, when I saw her lay deadlike, I should not live long after her.'

'Ah, Richard, that is the language of a heart that does not know the strength of the body it is lodged in. Some of us must live to close the grave over all that sweetened our lot below, whatever unwillingness we feel to survive them. And while God has work for us to do,' he added with fervor, 'so be it!'

'Now let us go back, Mr. Hudson. I promise you I'll keep very patient, depending on your doing what you say the very first thing to-morrow morning.'

'Certainly, the very first, if we be spared to see it: and I'll take you to the mill I spoke of, and show you all the rooms; and then we can judge which will be the fittest for Helen.'

'Oh, I wish I knew how to thank you!'

'It is not much I can do; what I can I will. But remember we have difficulties to encounter yet, in more than one quarter.'

'Pho! what care I for difficulties,' cried Richard, with a flash of his natural joyousness, at the same time pitching high into the air a small pebble that he had picked up. 'Do you think I'm such a baby as to expect things to tumble out, of themselves, just as I would have them? You lazy manufacturers are so used to see the machinery do your work for you, that you can't judge of us field laborers, who carry all before us by mere strength and perseverance.'

Hudson smiled: 'You have odd notions of machinery, my fine fellow, if you think it does our work for us. It only makes us work.'

'Little's the machinery I want to keep me agoing, when the work to be done is for the advantage of—we won't name no names, if you please, Mr. Hudson,' he continued more merrily and archly than before; 'and as to the great secret that's between us now, according to your finding out, mum! not a word to any living soul.'

'Of course not,' replied Hudson; and as he followed

Richard's now bounding step up the creaking stairs, he sighed heavily over the recollection of his own early hopes, and the sad presentiment of a coming blight on those of his interesting companion.

Helen was perfectly recovered; and her anxiety to prove it induced a cheerfulness of manner that enlivened the whole party, now completed by the addition of Willy. The evening passed delightfully: it was like one of their own cottage evenings; and when parting in the street, Hudson reiterated his promise of taking Richard to his friend's mill the next day, after consulting with Mr. H——, whom they were to see early. Richard most cordially blessed him, and walked on to South's, repeating to himself his conviction there was not such another perfect character in all the world as his new friend. Even Mr. Barlow came short of his standard just then, so full was the poor boy of that hope to which a young spirit cleaves as to its natural element. He saw no real difficulties in the way of Helen's removal to what his fancy pictured as a sphere of comparative enjoyment in the superior mill; and beyond that lay a vista terminated by a cottage resembling the home of his infancy, which he was at liberty to fit up as he pleased. Sweet seemed the toils that were to earn that visionary independence; short and swift the years that must intervene before he might hope to rise so high in the squire's service as to warrant the expectation. He fell to considering, on his now pleasant pillow, the respective merits of woodbines, jasmines, China roses, clematis, and other candidates for the honor of overshadowing that rustic porch where Helen was to sit, on a summer evening, and superintend the knitting of his infirm grandmother, while busily engaged in needlework for other branches of the family; and in the midst of his fragrant perplexities the young gardener fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DEATH OF HOPE.

Hudson, punctual to his appointment, brought the desired permission to visit his friend's cotton-mill, together with an assurance from Mr. H. that he would do everything in his power to effect the admission of Helen into that establishment, at the same time reminding Hudson that difficulties might arise, not easily to be surmounted. The afternoon was the time fixed on for proceeding to the factory, situated several miles from M. ; and as they crossed some stubble-fields, where the bright sun-beam fell warm and unclouded, while the little birds sported around them, peering for a grain of corn, or snatching from the bramble its ripening treasure, Richard felt as though the last few days had been passed in a feverish dream, and marvelled at the remembrance of depression so severe as to have already blanched his cheek and dimmed his eye. 'Let the mill be what it may,' said he, 'the situation is enough to determine me. Why the very breath one draws here is like new life after that horrid town.'

'Yes,' replied Hudson, 'at this hour and under such a sky, I confess it is : but we must not forget that the mill-work lasts from before sunrise till after sunset, most part of the year ; and as the ground lies low, unwholesome mists will rise early and late. The situation is not considered so healthy as you might suppose ; at least for those who cannot enjoy the sunshine.'

They soon quitted the fields, approaching a sort of village composed of exceedingly poor, uncleanly-looking

cottages. The air lost much of its freshness, seemingly impregnated by the smoke that rose from several towering chimneys attached to buildings disproportionably low. Conspicuous in the midst, or rather on the edge of the cluster, wholly detached from all the others, rose a lofty square fabric of imposing appearance, to which Hudson pointed, saying, 'There's our mill.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Richard, 'why that's a noble-looking place, to be sure. And only see, Mr. Hudson, how the sun shines upon all the windows on that side. Ay, and it's plain he must shine there all day, for I can see through it, the glasses are so plenty, and I see it's open to the south-east as well as to the south-west.'

'All the rooms are lighted on three sides, I believe,' observed Hudson.

'What a size they must be! Come, this is a deal better than I thought; and there can be no want of fresh air in it.'

Hudson shook his head: 'The windows are never open.'

'That's bad: but rooms so large must be airy of themselves, and cheerful too they can't help being, with so much sunshine.'

'You see it under every advantage,' said Hudson, 'and must judge accordingly.'

They now entered a long archway, where Hudson inquired for the principal acting manager, who soon appeared, and conducted them up a flight of stone stairs. 'I bring you here first,' said he to Richard, 'instead of taking you in a regular way through the rooms, because I have some orders to give respecting the machinery.' Thus speaking, he opened a door, and the youth stood in mute astonishment at the scene presented to him.

The apartment, though large, was by no means high in proportion to its size; and along the ceiling, closely placed together, ran a number of black leather straps, attached to wheels and pulleys, every one of which was in the most rapid motion, accompanied by a noise sufficient to drown any voice not raised to a painful pitch. On the



floor stood a vast number of frames, seemingly all iron, with just space sufficient between them to allow a passage for the operations of their attendants. These were chiefly girls, dirty, barefooted, and gloomy-looking, who cast a cold glance on the strangers, and pursued their work, which consisted in watching the movements of innumerable cones of cotton, the threads being supplied by machinery, which also kept the spindles perpetually revolving, each when filled requiring to be replaced by another. The party walked round the room, but no variety appeared in the occupation : each frame exactly resembled the rest ; each had its own leather straps running on their pulleys ; and its own wheel, or flyer, fixed against the ceiling as it appeared, whirling round with the same rapidity, the same monotonous noise as its fellows. The same mechanical employment occupied each individual laborer—a human piece of mechanism, attached to those of iron and leather, passing to and fro within a confined space, with an air of vacant listlessness such as Richard had never beheld among any class of work-people. The air of the room, if air it might be called, which felt more like the absence of that refreshing element, was oppressive to a most sickening degree ; its prevailing savor was that of rank oil, necessarily used in great quantities for the suppling the leather, and greasing the machinery ; the temperature was dreadfully high, and a tightness came on his chest, that rendered the operation of breathing quite laborious. Every minute brought an increase of these oppressive sensations, and glad he was when the manager, opening a door, conducted them into another apartment, divided by a wooden partition from the former.

This contained the master-power, the mighty engine that kept everything in motion. An immense iron wheel, of which only the upper half appeared above the floor and reached to the roof, raised high to afford it space, was making its rapid revolutions, by means of two enormous joints of the same metal, that, playing from above, alternately raised and depressed what Richard would have

called the handles of the wheel. The pulsation of the boarding on which he stood, as the thundering strokes fell rapidly upon his ear, almost dismayed the astonished rustic, and he shrank with cautious eye from approaching the narrow chasm within which the wheel was carried round with such a tremendous sweep. Near the door was a tall upright frame, round which two large iron balls were whirled at the extremity of strong rods. Everything was on a scale so gigantic, the motion was so impetuous, the noise so deafening, that he felt stunned.

When they returned to the work-room the manager pointed to a wooden frame, reaching high from the floor, and said, 'You see we box off our machinery.'

'What does he mean?' asked Richard, as the other stopped to give some order.

'There is a very dangerous thing, called an upright shaft, in that box,' replied Hudson. 'It keeps constantly in rapid motion, and when left exposed, very dreadful injury is inflicted, and often instant death to the poor children who are caught in passing it.'

'Can any mortal man be so wickedly cruel,' said Richard: 'nothing should bribe me to let Mary or Willy ever go near such works.'

Hudson shook his head; 'Mary must pass it many times in a day, in Mr. Z.'s mill; and it is not until some severe measures have been taken that our factory gentlemen in general are brought to box it off, as you see here. That is one of the crying evils against which our friends direct their strong efforts.'

Richard made some remark, of which the word 'murdering' alone reached his friend's ear. They were now again in the room first entered, and the oppression seemed to fall more heavily than before on his lungs. 'At any rate,' said he, 'Helen shan't come to this room. A baker's oven would be as comfortable, and a deal more wholesome.'

The next room, however, was no better; the *machinery* was similar in appearance, though belonging to

a different stage of the work ; the employment of the laborers was not the same, but the aspect precisely so ; and the atmospheric evil not one whit ameliorated. Richard walked round as before, Hudson keeping the manager in conversation, and anxiously did he look for some token of cheerfulness, or even of ordinary intelligence, among the young people. Many had features evidently formed to express it ; and some wore an air of boldness far from agreeable ; but the same absence of all that characterizes the youthful countenance still prevailed ; the same look of gloom and listlessness, the same measured movement, attendant on that of the whirling machinery about them.

‘ I am sick of the sight of those twirling bobbins,’ said he to Hudson : ‘ is the whole place full of them ? ’

‘ No, we are going through the factory the wrong way, and shall end, I suppose, where the work begins. You will soon see the cotton preparing for this stage of twisting and filling.’

They next found themselves in a room crowded with low iron frames, of which the front parts advanced and receded in perpetual motion, just leaving space between for the girls to stand. Threads were stretched upon the frames, which incessantly snapped, and the laborer’s office was to catch and piece the separated ends.

‘ This is Mary’s work,’ said Hudson ; ‘ and Katy’s is to creep underneath and pull off the loose cotton.’

‘ Why, she would be crushed to death.’

‘ Habit makes her expert in avoiding the danger ; but you see it is fatiguing, and the least heedlessness would be dangerous.’

Richard both saw and felt it ; a new impression with regard to factory-work was fast taking place of the former one ; but he said little.

They soon found themselves in an apartment where the machinery and the labor were wholly dissimilar. The former consisted of enormous cylinders, piled one above another, and covered with a moveable case, which

was raised to admit of the necessary operation, performed chiefly by men: but a number of girls and young women were also employed in looking to the deep cans where the cotton, rent to pieces by the cylinders, was thrown out in beautiful flakes. These rapidly filled, and when full were taken away, being replaced by empty ones. There was, however, a worse annoyance in that room than in any of the preceding; the flue—fine particles of cotton wool—so impregnated the air, that Richard soon found not only his coat covered, but his throat lined with them. At first he had preferred this branch of the work, but the irritating effect of the flue was tormenting.

‘This is Helen’s department,’ said Hudson.

‘This!’ and Richard looked round him with painful curiosity. Just then, the hour for tea arrived, and a signal being given, the whole machinery at the same instant stood still. The manager apologized for leaving them, saying he would be back in a quarter of an hour, and Richard eagerly watched the effect on the laborers of this short respite from toil.

There were no seats; they gathered themselves in groups, or stood singly leaning against the frames, or sat down on the floor, hastily swallowing whatever they had brought for the meal. Of course, it was abundantly mixed with flue; but this appeared a less evil in Richard’s eye than the mixing of young people of different sexes, and the sort of conversation that seemed to be passing among them. Many, indeed, appeared to think of nothing but the luxury of a short rest on the floor for their weary bodies; but evidently there was a great deal going on, in an under tone, that would not have borne publishing. He became impatient, and said, ‘Let us go back to some of the rooms we have seen; for I want to find out one where they are more comfortable—and more safe,’ he added, after a pause.

The search, however, was fruitless, so far as comfort was concerned. In these rooms the girls with difficulty *squatted* themselves in small parties between the rows



of frames, which ran quite across them. The same aspect of exhaustion, the same vacancy, and lack of youthful animation prevailed. Hollow cheeks, heavy eyes, narrow chests and stooping shoulders, met the inquiring gaze at every turn. Discontent, not noisy or active, but gloomy and silent, seemed impressed on all, together with a sort of helpless resignation, to what they knew must be. Hudson spoke often and kindly as he passed them, but seldom got a reply—never a cheerful one. Their minds seemed to stagnate, their spirits to have wholly evaporated, and a sort of indifference, the furthest possibly removed from all feeling of enjoyment, reigned supreme. The time allowed for their meal soon expired; in a moment every wheel was flying round, every strap in motion, every little spindle revolving in its place, and with heavy step the attendants resumed their stations, pursuing the same monotonous work, which if Richard had been a classical scholar, he might aptly have compared to the punishment of Sisyphus.

The manager now rejoined them, and Richard saw the remaining departments; the first and last stages; the weighing and rolling, and carding and drawing out of the raw material; the winding and sorting and packing of the finished thread; but though some of the rooms enjoyed more ventilation, and were less oppressively heated than others, he saw nothing to cheer him; and they had passed the outer gate some minutes before he broke silence.

‘How different a mill is from all I had fancied!’

‘What did you expect?’

‘Why, I supposed it was a dark, dismal-looking place, where the people had to run about, and work very fast, with a great deal on their minds, and a world of management necessary, but this is nothing of the sort.’

‘Then you find it better than you expected?’

‘Better! no; fifty times worse. You see, I’m used to hard labor, and can’t say but I sometimes get more than I like of out-door work in all weathers; but then, Mr. Hudson, I have worked like a man, not like a wheel

and pulley. My mind has gone along with my hands, and I had something to keep me in remembrance that I was better than the spade I dug with. I never was idly disposed; but if fatigue came over me for a minute or so, I could stop my spade and rest upon it; it didn't dig of itself, and force my foot to follow it.'

'That last,' said Hudson, 'is the most reasonable part of your remark. As to the first, if you consider, there is some room for thought in the work you have just seen. A machine can't put the cotton in the scales, or tell when the threads break, and piece them, or reckon the bales, and ticket them; or——'

'It's all very true; but tell me what it is makes the people look so like machines, if they don't feel so?'

'Many things, Green, assist to produce that effect. Did not the air of the room oppress you?'

'Indeed it did. Sometimes in summer, just before a great thunder-storm, I have felt as if I was pent up in a box, with a weight on my head, and really got quite dizzy for a while; but though that is the nearest thing I can think of to liken it to, those rooms were fifty, aye, five hundred times worse. The weight seemed to be not only on my head, but all over me; and then the sickening smell and the whirring noise—I'll tell you what, the first few days in a factory would make me ill, and when I got over that, I should become stupid.'

'You have answered your own question so far. If we had no other plea for short hours and a frequent change of hands, the dreadful heat and unwholesomeness of the atmosphere would be enough. You may suppose what it must be when the gas is lighted, adding to the closeness and the bad smell of the place: in winter they require it for many hours, morning and evening. Then the sunshine, cheerful as it would otherwise be, comes in at those endless windows with such power as to broil the poor creatures, and make them wish it away, instead of rejoicing in its brightness.'

'Another thing,' said Richard, 'is the constant stand-

ing, and just fidgetting about within such a narrow space, in those rooms where we first went ; the others are better as to giving more liberty, but the cotton flies about so much in them as to injure, I should think, everybody that breathes there.'

'It kills many. Did you see the little boy sitting in a heap of the raw cotton, swallowing his portion quite in a cloud of flue?'

'Yes ; a ragged, miserable-looking creature he was. I noticed his famished face as he munched that hard, 'mouldy crust.'

'But generally the laborers in that mill are remarkable for a favorable appearance. They are examined by a strictly conscientious surgeon, who is also frequently taken through the rooms to judge whether any of the people are getting sickly ; in which case they are removed.'

Richard stared. 'Why, Mr. Hudson, what do you call sickly if those pale, yellow creatures, with cheeks sunk in, and narrow faces, were not so?'

'I can assure you, Green, you have seen the healthiest and best-regulated mill in M.; nay, one of the best in England. There is no one in it who even looks under age ; and every public rule is most strictly obeyed, together with many excellent ones laid down by the owner for the benefit and comfort of his people. The inspectors hold it up as a pattern to everybody, and as a proof of what may be done to soften and improve the system. The poor people would flock to it from every other establishment, only for a strict regulation to the contrary on the part of the owner ; and it is to get over this, in Helen's favor, that I fear we shall find a difficulty.'

'It will not matter ; for I don't want to bring her here.'

'Why so?'

'I tell you,' said Richard, impatiently, 'it would turn her into a stone. She would droop and die. Twelve hours!' he repeated, 'twelve hours a day shut up in such a place, and in such company! No, she shall go

back to the country, and weed in the fields, or feed a farmer's pigs—anything but such a life as this.'

Hudson looked greatly distressed. He could not bear to tell the irritated youth how very much worse in every respect was the place she at present labored in, compared with that which they had visited. Long habit had so familiarized him with the moody, vacant looks of the factory-laborers, that he did not expect they would have made so strong an impression on the mind of his companion. In fact it is the peculiar feature that strikes a visitor whose attention is in any measure directed to the countenances of the mill-people. Seen at their work, they are a community of automata. Nothing seems to animate them. The cold listlessness of their looks sends a chill to the heart of the spectator, who, if he feel rightly, must feel it a degradation to his species to be chained, as it were, to a parcel of senseless machinery, confused by its din, and forced to obey its movements with scarcely an interval for thought or for repose. This is the case where the laborers are principally adults; not in the mocking sense of having 'the strength and appearance of fourteen years;' but really young men and women. The cheerless though noisy monotony of their lives; the total absence of all that can elevate the mind, even so far as an habitual contemplation of God's works elevates that of the plough-boy, or expands it into social kindness among loving kindred, or pleasant companions—this stamps the character of vacancy, selfishness, and gloom, on faces that should beam with the gladness, if not with the intelligence, of youth. The gentle spring-time of life is checked, its budding promises nipped and blighted by the unkindliness of an atmosphere such as God never made, and such as man could never have prepared for his fellows to pine in, had not the lust of gold steeled his heart against every pleading humanity. Machinery yields an immense profit; therefore machinery must be cared for; and the question is, not by what means the deleterious effects accompanying its operations might



be mitigated, if they cannot be neutralized, to the laborers attendant on its movements ; but how may those movements be quickened into ten-fold velocity, irrespective of the tenfold injury inflicted on the poor, who, for a morsel of bread, are compelled to link themselves to its wheels, and to bury themselves in the heat of its cauldrons.

This refers to such as may be supposed of age to choose for themselves ; and Richard had remarked mothers, probably, of grown-up families, engaged in all the departments, with elderly men, and those of middle age, mingled in the throng, particularly where the great carding-machines threw out their flue so abundantly. They, of course, were under no compulsion, save that of poverty ; and had they rather chosen to starve, they had liberty so to do ; but an immense proportion of the hands employed in the mills are mere children, driven thither by parental authority ; their time, their health, their lives regarded as a bare matter of merchandize between two parties, of whom the one was eager to grasp whatever the commodity would fetch, and the other to wring out from his helpless purchase the utmost value that it was capable of producing. The one careful to expedite his child to the scene of exhausting labor ; the other to expedite his wheels and spindles with the least possible intermission while those poor little fingers and feet are at his disposal : the one counting his pence, the other his packages ; and each jealous lest he should have failed to extract full profit from the withering frame of his human machine. And as is the child, so is the dreadful responsibility bandied from the one to the other.

‘ I support my children,’ says the father, ‘ and being a poor man, I must not keep them idle ; they must do what they can to help. I hire them out to a gentleman to serve him, and if he overworks them the blame is his. I can’t interfere with his establishment—I take it for granted he knows his duty, being an educated gentleman, with a family of his own probably ; and of course he will do what is right.’

‘I live by the produce of my mills,’ says the manufacturer, ‘I have laid out immense sums on fitting them up, and in laying in an abundant stock of the raw material. I have an undoubted right to make what profit I can on this costly speculation, and to do so I must avail myself to the full of the capabilities of my works. It is not for me to judge what other people’s children are competent to do; I leave that to their legitimate guardians, who must know the nature and extent both of their abilities and my requirements. If these guardians accept my terms, and place their little ones at my disposal, I am bound to conclude that they are fully able to keep pace with my machinery, and I must compel them so to do, or I lose unjustly in the bargain. If they are unfit for the task, let those answer for the consequences who voluntarily send them to me.’

Voluntarily!—No, it is not a voluntary act. You well know that the cravings of nature must be satisfied; and though your poverty-stricken brother asks no more than the dry morsel from which your pampered dog would turn away, still without that morsel he cannot exist. You enter tacitly, at least, into a confederacy with your wealthy compeers, and leave him no option between actual starvation and a compact whereby he obtains a scanty meal, and a shelter from the inclement sky, at the price of his own or his children’s life-blood. With one hand you niggardly supply that vital stream, with the other you copiously drain it away; and when by this sure process of daily diminution you have left only the breathless carcase, your progress, rolling along the middle way in your luxurious carriage, or guiding the full-fed steed upon its track, will not be impeded by yon miserable group, who, stealing past upon the narrow causeway, follow a pauper’s funeral. Those well-worn cloaks of rusty black are but thrown on, by parochial charity, for the occasion; the interminable toil of those now lifeless limbs, though it supplied you with the rich caparisons *that you glory in displaying*, could not lay by the super-

fluity of a burial fee for the victim, nor provide a mourning garment for the heart-broken, conscience-stricken survivors. And why conscience-stricken? If they squandered in strong drink, or appropriated in idleness the child's earnings, they have indeed a terrible item to answer for in your common account with God: but if there was no alternative—if nothing short of wealth would satisfy you, where nothing short of early destruction to others was its probable, its almost inevitable price—then will they stand, not as fellow-culprits, beside you, but as accusing witnesses against your soul; at the day when worldly riches cannot avail; when worldly honors shall be proved a mocking dream; and when worldly gratifications shall but be remembered to sharpen the gnawings of the worm that dieth not; and to quicken the burnings of the fire that shall not be quenched.

‘What a pretty girl is that!’ remarked a visitor to the junior member of an extensive cotton firm, who was exhibiting to him the different departments of the mill. ‘What a fine creature she will be at twenty!’

The young gentleman looked at the beautiful creature pointed out, then glanced his eye over the whole throng of her youthful companions, and turning it on the visitor with a significant leer, quietly answered in an undertone,—‘There are not many in this room who will live to be twenty!’

When Richard Green returned home, he found his grandmother in considerable alarm, while a coarse-looking man was talking in the loud tone of self-satisfied superiority, evidently enjoying her trepidation, ‘And so, good woman, as I said before, fine words won’t butter no parsnips. ’Tis all right and becoming of you to thank me for waiting so long; but as I am not going to wait longer, down, I say, with the rent.’

Richard’s entrance appeared to increase the widow’s distress: she looked appealingly at him, not to invite but to deprecate his interference. He understood her, and

crossed over to James, who placed a cold trembling hand in his, but spoke not.

‘I don’t believe,’ continued the landlord, looking round him, ‘that all these sticks you’ve got here would fetch the seven and sixpence, to say nothing of costs; but by way of example to the neighbors I shall be forced to execute. I’ve a deal of property in this court,’ he continued, pompously drawing himself up, ‘and what’s to become of my rents if tenants go on for a matter of three weeks together without paying a rap?’

‘Give me till the beginning of next week, Mr. Scott, and I promise you it shall all be paid.’

‘I won’t, indeed I won’t; for I can’t! woman. I must buy stock for my trade, or how can I live? You have children in the mill, and they get their wages punctual; but I, a respectable tradesman, sends in my bill to the same parties, and is told by the footman to call again. They forget my account, because ’tis too small for their big pockets; and you refuse it because it’s too big for your little one, hey, missus?’

If any one of the party had laughed at his facetiousness, it is probable that Mr. Scott, who set up for a wit in his way, would have been mollified; but his auditors were in no laughing mood, and he became more lofty than ever.

‘I tell ye, ’tis no use talking: the money to-day, or an execution to-morrow.’

Richard had remained silent: his first impulse was to be rough; for his spirit was strangely chafed; but a better feeling prevailed, and he spoke with his usual civility.

‘I’m sorry, sir, my grandmother has been obliged to keep you waiting: but perhaps you will consider how much illness there has been in the family, and take her promise now. I’m sure she will keep it.’

‘Why, you are a civil-spoken lad, and well dressed too: how came you here?’

‘I came to M. on business, for a gentleman in Suffolk.’

‘Who did you come to?’



‘Mr. H. at the great house on the hill.’

‘The great house on the hill! ha! ha! we’ve great houses enow, and hills enow, about this big town. However, I know who you mean; and I’ve some notion of obliging you. Let me see; seven and sixpence, and two and sixpence. Well, old woman, I’ll call on you when this week, that began yesterday, is out; and you’ll come down with your ten shillings, will you?’

‘I will, God helping me,’ faltered the widow.

‘Don’t forget then: I can tell you if it hadn’t been for that young fellow speaking so respectfully, I’d have been as good as my word: not for any ill-will I bear you, but to set an example, as I told you before.’ He nodded and went out.

The widow ran to Richard, and leaning on his shoulder exclaimed, while her tears streamed fast, ‘I would fain have hid this from you, my child!’

‘That is the worst of it, granny: you conceal from me things that I must know, sooner or later, instead of speaking out now I am here to consult with you. And you *may* speak out,’ he added, mournfully, ‘for I can’t well be more miserable than I am.’

A full explanation was at length given; and the fact appeared plain, that with all their struggling they could barely live upon the earnings of the three who labored for them. Among other things, the system of forfeitures had been rigidly enforced against Mary, whose companions easily provoked her, by noise and in other ways, to incur the fine; and many a sixpence was thus stopped out of her wages. The overlooker never inquired into particulars, nor listened to any mitigating statement: he had redoubled his vigilance since the information was laid against him for ill-treating her, and carefully visited every infringement of the rules with the penalty. Against this there was no appeal: the rules were hung up in the work-room, with the exact sum to be paid for any breach of them, and the fact once proved, the consequence was inevitable. This afforded a sad means of oppression in

some cases ; for the children naturally thought less of a pecuniary loss falling on their parents than of present severity to themselves ; although in the irritation of disappointment they rarely escaped double punishment at home. Some protection against idleness and insubordination on the part of his laborers, the employer must, in common justice, have ; and of the two, this plan of penalties is undoubtedly the best : but that master-evil—the want of due inquiry into the temper and habits of the men to whom are committed the persons, the principles, the interests of so many young creatures, and the absence of a wholesome restraint on their bad propensities, poisons the fountain-head, and carries corruption through the whole mass.

Mary Green needed a strict hand to control her rebellious disposition ; and she found one perfectly ready to do it, not for her good or for the advantage of their mutual employer, but from personal dislike. She saw this, and resentment quickened her hot temper to more frequent ebullitions, which generally ended in an open breach of some standing rule, and the imposition of its attendant fine.

These deductions formed no inconsiderable item in the widow's list of losses ; Richard had volunteered to make out an exact scale of their income and expenditure, in order to discover where the chief deficiency on the one hand, or extra expense on the other, lay : the first was soon calculated and noted down, the latter reluctantly given, for the poor old woman well knew how her boy's affectionate heart would be wrung by the miserable insufficiency of their diet and fuel ; but he would not be baffled, and many a time was the cuff of his jacket drawn across his eyes while writing the particulars. At last he threw the pen from him, exclaiming, 'Granny, the work-house is better than this.'

'The work-house, Richard, is not open to those who are able to labor, as we are, and can find employment.'

'Able !' thought the boy, as he gazed at the withered

hand which gently replaced the pen in his. 'Well, dearest granny, we will look all these things in the face : go on.'

The account was finished, and he said, 'Poor as your fare is, and not enough to support you properly, still it comes pretty nigh within your gains. I can't make out the deficiency.'

He was then told of Mary's continual forfeits, which exasperated him : 'Are they not content with kicking her about, but must they wrest her earnings from her too ?'

The widow told him that it could not be avoided ; Mary's conduct really provoking the penalty, as Katy herself had been obliged to admit, when closely questioned ; Helen corroborating it. She had reasoned and pleaded with the child, but to no purpose, and they must patiently wait till God gave her a better mind.

'I shall talk to her though,' observed Richard, 'and try if all my influence is gone. But, oh, granny, those mills are fearful places ! I felt as if the hot, unnatural air would melt away all that was good for anything in me, and leave me like one of the senseless machines, to do just whatever I was set about, right or wrong ; and you know what advantages the devil will take of that state of mind.' Then, after a pause, he exclaimed, 'Helen must be an angel to stand it all, and to get better and better, while the rest go to ruin.'

'She is no angel,' said James, whom they supposed to be asleep, 'but a poor sinful mortal ; yet a dear child of God, living by faith, and ripening for glory.'

Richard's brow contracted. 'Must everybody be dying who lives like a Christian ? Why does not Hudson die then ?'

'Some of us die for our good, brother ; and some of us live for the good of others.'

'Well, darling Jem, we won't argue about that,' he replied, kissing the cold damp brow of the patient sufferer. 'I only wish it might please the Lord to let you live for

my good, and I'd work the flesh off my bones for you, James ; indeed I would.'

'I don't doubt it : but He who loves me better than even you do is going to take me home soon ; *very* soon,' he added, with emphasis.

Richard gazed on him ; then starting up, he said, 'I must go this minute to Mr. H., for he bade me be there. The day after to-morrow—early in the morning ——' He threw himself on his knees beside the widow's chair, and clasping his arms round her, wept and sobbed like an infant.

And oh, how that maternal bosom yearned over the child so often cradled upon it ! She had no words of comfort for him ; her own heart was too full for speech ; she could but mingle her tears with his. James whispered, 'It will do him good ; he wanted such a relief.' He was right ; Richard, with swollen eyes, but a calmer spirit, took his hat, and with an affectionate farewell repaired to the great house on the hill, where Hudson had prepared for him a more than usually kind reception



## CHAPTER XX

### THICKENING GLOOM

MR. H. was one of those happy individuals, who, with the means, possess the will to benefit their fellow-creatures. He was not a mill-owner, nor, except with the most benevolent of that class, was he a popular character among them. The great point of difference between Mr. H. and the generality of his manufacturing friends consisted in this; that whereas they considered the personal interests of master and laborer to be things not only irreconcilable, but diametrically opposed one to another, he regarded them as identical. They looked on him as their enemy, because he was the avowed, uncompromising friend of their work-people, more particularly interesting himself on behalf of the children. He could not convince them, nor could they unconvince him, that even on the grounds of worldly policy, they would thrive better by making less haste to be rich at the expense of involving their fellow-creatures in so much misery and sin. They wished he had a mill, and nothing else to subsist by, confident that the pleadings of self-interest would soon stifle the voice of Quixotic benevolence: he was thankful to be spared the temptation; but felt confident that if exposed to it his principles would stand the test, imbibed as they were at the fountain of truth, and nourished by its streams.

When Richard Green appeared before him this evening, Mr. H. entered at once on the subject of the factory which he had visited, asking what impression it had made on his mind.

‘Indeed, sir, I can’t say it was a pleasant one. I never saw a place of the kind before, so could not judge of its advantages above others; and having always been used to field-labor, near the sea, I could hardly fancy myself living for a week in such a pent-up, sickly place, with the smell, and the noise, and the wearisomeness of doing the same thing over and over all day long.’

‘But you must do that in almost any business. For instance, in ploughing a field don’t you go on much in the same way?’

‘I don’t plough all the year round, sir; nor always in one field. Besides, nothing out of doors can be like those hot rooms.’

‘Well, what say you to a blacksmith’s shop? There is violent heat, and smoke, and noise and confinement.’

‘Oh, but, sir, if you please, there’s a deal of skill needed to become a good smith, and be able to set up for oneself soon. Then, too, a man likes to feel the strength that’s in his arm, and I hope you see the difference between hammering a bar of iron and frittering bits of cotton, sir?’

Richard, animated by this theme, suited the action to the word, and Mr. G., as he marked the proud swing of a muscular arm, rejoiced in his heart that some of England’s athletic yeomanry were still left to pursue their manly occupations.

‘I suppose,’ said he, smiling, ‘you would not object to be a miner, shut out from day-light, and fathoms deep from the air of heaven.’

‘I don’t know that, sir; there are no mines in my part of the country, and I always think God suits the people to the sort of work he has prepared for them in their own places. Not that I believe any Englishman is made to be stewed for twelve hours a day in such a place as I visited this morning, which, to be sure, is none of God’s making. However, sir, I would engage in the mines to-morrow, and do my best in that gloomy place; and at any rate,’ he added, in a tone that spoke his deep feeling, ‘at

any rate my heart wouldn't be pained by seeing weak women and young children pining about me. *They* would breathe the fresh air; and if my work was dark and hard, it would be lightened by knowing that the wages would keep them in freedom and comfort.'

'You are a noble young fellow, Green. I wish I could rouse such a manly spirit in the bosoms of some who have power to mitigate the hardships of those you so tenderly speak of, or even among the parents, the husbands, the brothers, of our poor factory girls.'

'Ah, sir, to do justly, and to love mercy, is the gift of God. I'm afraid you can't teach it to those whose hearts are hardened by the love of money; and as for the rest, why, what can they do? What can *I* do, who see all that I love better than myself pining and perishing? They must work, or starve; and no work is within their reach except what the mill-owners give. I see no remedy, except the grave.'

'Don't despond. Have you determined to remove the young person of whom Hudson spoke to my friend's mill, supposing I obtain admittance for her there?'

'I have not talked to her yet about it, sir,' replied Richard.

'Do, then, and let me know. You are returning to L., I believe, in a day or two, and my packet will be ready. Meanwhile, as I know you have a sick brother, whose situation requires more comforts than you can well procure at this season, oblige me by applying a trifle to his advantage, and for the present good by; God bless you, and keep you from all evil!'

As with one hand he placed two sovereigns in Richard's, with the other he opened a door, and was gone before he could have even received a word of thanks; but the parting blessing was returned on his head a thousand-fold by the astonished youth, though its accents did not reach his ear.

As an alms to himself, Richard's independent spirit would have shrank from the gift; but the situation of

those for whom it was intended forbade all feeling save that of fervent gratitude. He hastened away, and before even revisiting home, he found the landlord, paid the arrear, with another week's rent in advance, and then proceeded to lay the balance on the lap of his grandmother, where he had so often deposited his little earnings before want was known to them. She received it with tears of gratitude, and the gladdening influence of such a providential supply once more shed a gleam of cheerfulness over the little circle.

'Helen,' whispered Richard, 'I have a deal to say to you that concerns nobody else. It is about a factory I saw to-day.'

'Don't mention it just now, Richard; wait till we are alone, or with James only. To-morrow is Sunday, and we shall then have opportunity to talk. Not, indeed, about worldly matters,' she added, 'but something that will give us light as to what course we are to take, even with regard to the things of this life.'

With no small satisfaction did the widow steal away, and redeem from pledge a few articles, the absence of which on the Sunday would have greatly distressed her boy. Thus supplied, they made a comparatively respectable appearance, and in the house of God once more united their voices of prayer and praise.

In the afternoon, the widow accompanied the three younger children to their Sunday school, leaving Helen with Richard and James, to whom they read and sang, until the world, with all its cares, seemed lost to sight, and the holy calm of a felt Sabbath pervaded their souls. James asked for one more hymn, and selected that beautiful one of Watts,—

'There is a land of pure delight.'

When the last note had died away, Helen spoke,  
'Now, dear Richard, while our hearts are fixed, as I hope, on the things that are unseen and eternal, let me say a few words to you. It may be the means of spar-



ing you some trouble—no, not trouble, but anxiety. I well know you would count it no trouble, but a great pleasure, to do any brotherly kindness for me; so please not to interrupt me, but hear me patiently out.'

'I will,' said Richard, whose mind misgave him at this preface.

'I need not remind you what I am. I will not pain you by recounting acts of generous kindness to a poor orphan, done without any hope or thought of a recompense, but had in remembrance before God, and printed on my very heart. Well, it will some day be a comfort to you to know that none of it all has been lost upon me. Instead of feeling the desolateness of a friendless child, I have been a most happy girl. I was taught my duty in words, and shown how to perform it by example. You have been a dear, precious brother to me, Richard; the voice of unkindness never reached me, the finger of scorn never was pointed at me, so long as I was under your watchful eye; full of kindness to me, and though you were but a boy, full of protection, too, that nobody cared to despise. I felt the value of it before I lost it, and now——'

'Helen, Helen,' exclaimed the agitated youth, with vehement earnestness, 'as long as there's a breath in this body——'

'Hush, now, pray do be silent. You promised me, and I can't get through what I have to say unless you let me go on without interrupting. I should not say so much now, only for what is to follow it. I never was very strong in body; my good health was owing more to the quiet life I led, and the sea-breezes of our own dear home. I had peace within, and that made all seem well without; but I dare say wherever I had gone, any change in my way of living would have done the same.'

James shook his head; and the dissenting movement was not lost on Richard.

'It matters nothing now,' pursued Helen, 'for He who

has the power of life and death sets us all our bounds, which we cannot pass. It is of no use concealing the truth; I feel sure, quite sure, positively sure, that my days are numbered, and that not many remain. If I was taken back to L. to-morrow, and had everything again as it used to be, no good could come of it, as to my health. Death is at work in me, and all the care I can have for this world is not to lose the comfort and blessing of being with my first, best, dearest friend—our own granny.'

Her voice faltered, and tears trickled down her cheeks, but Richard was mute. He listened in desperate calmness, while James, with closed eyes, seemed lost in prayer. Helen resumed,—

'I know, Richard, you have been planning to have me removed to another mill, where more attention is paid to the comfort of the laborers; but you must consider that the distance is too great for a stronger girl than me, even in the best weather; and you could not get us all into it, and move granny, too, to a much more expensive place. If I was stout, I would gladly go there, for I might be able to make something by out-door work, late and early; and coming here on Saturdays, with a better penny in my hand, would almost reconcile me to being away all the week; but it can't be; and I feel sure that my path of duty is to stop here, to be a companion to dear granny, and to do what little I can in striving to keep Mary, Willy, and poor Katy from going astray. I hope it may please the Lord that my last illness shan't be so long nor so helpless as this dear boy's,' stroking James' pale face, 'but even if it is so, I'm sure of the tenderest care from those that never forsook me in health, and never will when I am laid on my dying bed.'

She paused, and Richard quietly asked, 'Have you any more to say, Helen, or may I put in a word?'

'I have no more to say on that subject.'

'Well, then, in the first place you are not a doctor; and it is quite impossible you should know so much

about your health as you fancy. 'Tis that vile, infamous mill, and the savages you have to do with, and the fatigue, and the confinement, and the unnatural air of a pent-up place like this. If once you were on the cliffs again——'

'I should die the sooner, Richard. I used to think of the brisk wind blowing over the cliffs to refresh me, when I felt languid and ill, but now the thought of it makes me shiver, and I rather seem to want the hot air of the work-rooms, that suits me better.'

'Aye, as the dying drunkard wants the dram that kills him.'

'Don't speak so angrily, Richard; but in answer to what you say about the doctors'—she hesitated, then added, 'I thought it my duty to know the real state of the case, and I went to a skilful doctor who is very kind to the poor. He told me nothing more than I was sure of already; but he confirmed me in my opinion.'

'Did he say you would die?' gasped Richard.

'He said he could not hold out any hope of a long life to me: and when I pressed him to speak plainly, he owned that by a long life he meant another year or two.'

'Now tell me that doctor's name, and where he lives, for I'll have it from his own lips.'

'Mr. Hudson knows him well; but, Richard, what's the use of it all? Man's words can neither shorten nor lengthen my days. We must look to Him who is all-powerful, and pray that he will give us grace to receive at his hand both good and evil. Not that it will be evil to me,' she added, looking up most joyously, 'to be taken to where my dear Saviour is; but it will be a trial to those that are left, I know.'

'I shan't be one of them,' said James. 'We shall be together still, Helen.'

'You are cruelly unfeeling!' exclaimed Richard.

'You won't lose her, and you care not what we suffer.'

'Yes, dear, I care much for it,' replied James, meekly; 'there is nothing I would not do to keep her o

earth, if it was God's will ; for she has been the blessing of our house ever since she set foot in it. I have great peace in my mind ; great joy sometimes, and always a clear sight of what the Lord has done for my sinful soul. That is a mercy that He alone could give ; but I love this book,' laying one hand on the Bible, 'which He gave to teach me the right way : and I love this friend,' laying the other hand on Helen's, 'whom He sent to instruct me in its blessed truths, and to encourage me in my short but rather painful pilgrimage. Do you think I love you so little as not to wish she might remain, to be the same blessing to you all that she has been to me ?'

Richard hung his head over his clasped hands : then suddenly looking up, said, 'I can't believe and I won't believe but that the doctors could still save you, by the Lord's blessing. Now, Helen, promise me solemnly that you will do whatever they bid you, when I have spoken to them.'

'I am quite ready to do whatever any skilful and honest doctor bids me, if he declares he expects it will restore my health : but if not, Richard, don't embitter my short span with medicines, and blisterings, and such things. I suffer little pain now ; and I hope I may sink gently, as it were, as many others do.' She spoke with a simple feeling and meek submission that went to Richard's heart. 'No,' he replied, 'no doctor shall lay his hand on you to make you suffer, for my selfish satisfaction, only if he promises to cure you. And if not, Helen, if not, then you must pray for me that the Lord will give me grace to take patiently the sorrow he sees fit to bring over my young years—a sorrow that will last as long as life itself. I may live this many a day, for I am strong, and I have not been put into these murdering mills ; but it will be like that old pear-tree in Mr. Barlow's orchard, *at home*, that the lightning struck when we were children. It stays there, with life in it, but it has few leaves, and no blossoms ; when all the other trees look gay in



spring, it is a dark, melancholy thing, unlike all around it. I shall be like that tree, Helen, when you are gone.'

'Not so, Richard. You will bear much fruit to the glory of God who has planted you in his garden; and to the support and comfort of those that are left.' Richard shook his head; James remarked, 'It will be a storm indeed, but not to blast you, Richard, as the lightning did the pear-tree's branches. Don't you remember what is written—"Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." This is what will be done for you.'

'Nobody wants it more, Jem. I thought myself a bit better than others about me; but since I came here I have found out such wicked, rebellious, impatient, angry passions in my heart, that I hardly believe myself so good as a heathen.'

'Well, I cannot deny that the factory system is one of the worst and cruellest things ever invented to pamper the rich at the expense of the poor. It fattens them, and melts the flesh off our bones: it clothes them in grand raiment, and bids us shiver in our rags: it brings all indulgences within their reach, and kills the industrious creatures whose toil provides them: but even in the factory, Richard, God's own people are yet his care: he makes all things still work together for good to them. I say, and I don't say it in anger, but in grief, that the mill-work has shortened Helen's life—it has murdered her,' he added, crimsoning with emotion: 'and that will be declared at the judgment-seat, before all the angels of God, not only as to our Helen, but thousands and thousands more; and many a soul it has sealed up in sin, before casting the poor body into the grave. But to her it has only been the brightening of future glory; and to you, Richard, who best understand her value, it will be a chastening, not for the present joyous but grievous, very grievous, but afterwards yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We all want subduing; and

heart-break like this will wean you from the world more than anything else would.'

Richard could not answer: he buried his face in his brother's pillow, and wept.

Alas! many such a blight on young affection is daily falling through that most inhuman system, where no such Christian principle exists to sanctify the visitation. Many a young man sees the desire of his eyes taken away as with a stroke; and while the vacancy in the mill is presently filled up from among the starving hundreds who press to barter their lives for bread, the bereaved bosom aches beneath the sense of a void that cannot be filled. Then comes the hour of sore temptation, when the gin-shop, the low gambling house, the licentious revel proffer their treacherous solace, and the house that should have been a sanctuary of wedded love becomes the filthy den of a heartless drunkard—the rendezvous of all that is vile—a habitation for devils. On the one hand the great enemy of man leads on the votaries of wealth into a golden snare, and many hurtful lusts that drown them in destruction and perdition: on the other he drives the poor and needy into desperate crimes, either as a set-off against the miseries they cannot avoid, or as an expected means of improving their wretched condition. In no light can the matter be honestly viewed, without a secret consciousness that the curse of heaven is upon it; and better it were for England that her commercial greatness were annihilated, and her place among the nations not that of a Queen but of a vassal, than that in her skirts should be found the blood of so many poor innocents as she yearly sacrifices at the shrine of her transient prosperity.

But would such loss and degradation follow on the abandonment of this system? Far from it. The true greatness of our country has ever consisted in the superiority of her humblest classes over those of other lands. *The independence of an English laborer is as proverbial as his industry*; and now that this is becoming, through

the money-loving greediness of the few grinding down the poverty-stricken faces of the rapidly increasing many, a mere name without a reality, so also will the strength of England be. An unnatural state of things, wholly foreign to the old English character, is transforming 'a bold peasantry, their country's pride,' into a degraded, discontented, restless, reckless, turbulent mob. Two classes, hitherto bound together by mutual interests and mutual respect, are daily becoming more opposed the one to the other. We may close our eyes to the inevitable consequences, appalling even as concerns present things alone; but no such wilful blindness to the evil will either quench its existence or arrest its course. If those who alone have power to do so refuse to listen, we cannot help it; but as we must all expect to be buried in the ruin they are bringing on the country, it is no less our duty to lift the voice of remonstrance, than it is theirs to regard that voice. If God gives over, alike the senators and the commercial classes among us to hardness of heart, we must bow beneath the trying dispensation; but one thing is certain—such hardness is of their own choosing; they can never cast off the responsibility that rests on them; and the curse that through their callousness smites the land, will lie, a fearful and an immoveable weight, upon their own guilty souls for ever.

We now return to the tale, which, however needfully disguised as to persons and places, we can assure our readers is substantially correct in its leading particulars. To this, at least, the experience of all who are at all conversant in the cotton and other mill-works will bear testimony, that it very faintly shadows forth realities which have crossed their daily path.

Helen Fleetwood was, as she had said, not a girl of robust make, or rude strength; but no tendency to a sickly habit had ever appeared in her constitution. The rapid effect of mill-labor upon it had led her to suspect some lurking unsoundness; but a little more experience at

observation would have proved to her how short a resistance the stoutest frame could offer to the debilitating effects of the atmosphere and other evils to which she was exposed throughout the live-long day. Neither could it be questioned that the mental sufferings which could not but await any modest, right-minded female in such society, had a very large share in undermining her bodily health. This is one of the worst features of mill-labor: those engaged in it are taken chiefly from amongst the lowest class, and being occupied in the work at a time when education should be forming the character, there is seldom any power of resistance provided against the flood of iniquity that always deepens and widens in proportion to the number of human beings congregated together. Accustomed to associate with vice in all its shapes, while the natural corruption of the heart finds a congenial element in whatsoever is opposed to holiness, what can be expected but that out of so much evil treasure evil things should be perpetually poured? The absence of all moral restraint, so far as a master's authority is concerned, fosters the mischief: it is true any noisy disturbance is punishable; but nothing short of that is taken cognizance of; there is no protection for the ear of female modesty, against all that can outrage it; and the hatred borne by female depravity against its opposite, is too well authenticated to leave a doubt that the very discovery of one among them who abhors such proceedings will ever stimulate the vile to do their worst. This had been the great ordeal to Helen, who, shining still like gold in the furnace, found its heat well nigh insupportable. She felt herself in a manner degraded, from being the unwilling but helpless witness to so much infamous language, accompanied as it will always be by conduct no less abandoned; and contrasted with the purity in which she had ever been shielded under the eye of her parental friend, it seemed a removal into the abode of evil spirits. She longed to escape it; she pined for deliverance; and this grief of heart preyed on her life to



an extent that soon defied all human skill to stay the progress of decay. The blasphemy that abounded was awful ; not only profane cursing and swearing was heard on every trivial occasion, but deliberate scoffing at God's name and word, infidel jests, atheistical arguments, were frequently uttered ; and such discourse as earth alone can furnish ; for surely in hell they cannot deny the terrific power that wreathes the burning chains around them. Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth are there ; but the voice of impious defiance is silenced ; for there, in a revelation of wrath indescribable as it is unappeasable, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

Lately, a new and an almost unutterable curse had been added to those already felt in the mills. A man of whom it is hard to think otherwise than as of an actual incarnation of Satan, had been among them personally, and had circulated by his delegates a vast deal of his infernal doctrine in that and other manufacturing districts. It will suffice to say that some half dozen of the young men in that mill had become Socialists. Beyond this it was impossible to go—Socialism is the *ne plus ultra* of six thousand years' laborious experience on the part of the great enemy of man—it is the moral Gorgon upon which whomsoever can be compelled to look must wither away : it is the doubly-denounced woe upon the inhabitants of earth—the last effort of Satanic venom wrought to the madness of rage by the consciousness of his shortened time. It is a known, a vaunted fact, that a large contribution was raised to provide a plentiful supply of the most horrible publications, for the express use of the young factory-laborers, and to engage effective distributors, that no opportunity might be lost ; and Helen Fleetwood had been doomed to hear some of the discourse of the wretched converts to this refinement of all blasphemous iniquity. She had, however, succeeded in partially putting down this outrage on behalf of herself and a few companions who were not wholly lost ; she compelled them to join her in a solemn declaration that

they would lay a public complaint before the Messrs. Z. by means of the newspaper, if any more was said in their hearing on the subject : and the aggressors seeing them in earnest, and conscious that the mill-owners must in that case take it up, thought it prudent to desist. This spirited proceeding had rallied a little party around Helen ; but they, too, frequently turned and reproached her for the petty persecution to which they were exposed by having upheld her in her squeamish notions. What harm, they asked, could a little talk do ? They were not going to turn heathens themselves ; they believed in God, though those foolish fellows laughed at his name ; and in the Bible, though they constantly tried to prove it the vilest book ever written ; but now they had made themselves enemies, and all to please her. Helen bore it patiently, as incomparably the least of two evils : and to one or two who seemed more in earnest in their protestations, she tried to show the duty of keeping aloof from all evil communication ; but this trial was by far the severest of all that she had to encounter, while continual sorrow oppressed her heart for those among whom she saw the diabolical doctrines gradually spreading, to the utter ruin of body and soul.

What marvel, then, that Helen Fleetwood should rapidly sink under these things ? Human nature, as she had recently been forced to see it in the mills, presented to her view an aspect so frightful, that even the companions of her early days seemed to her to rest under some heretofore undiscovered blot ; and she often sighed to flee away and to be at rest among the disembodied spirits of the redeemed. James alone, standing as he did on the extreme verge of mortal existence, with heart and hope already fixed in heaven, was an object of unshrinking regard to the poor harassed girl ; and even as she looked on Richard's honest countenance, beaming with integrity, with manly sincerity, and godly simplicity, the thought arose to repel the yearnings of innocent affection towards the dear playmate of her infancy. ' If he was brought

among those blaspheming profligates, what a wretch might he soon become !' She had continual heaviness and sorrow of heart, for those around her in the mill ; and at home she marked the growth of evil dispositions in the children from whom during hours of work she was usually separated. These were the things that barbed the shaft of disease, striking her tender frame through exhausting labor in unwholesome air ; and she felt the effects too powerfully to entertain an expectation, even had she desired it, of deriving benefit from any change that would have affected the body only.

But Helen Fleetwood was not one of those impatient characters who having obtained, through faith, a good hope for eternity, desire to cheat their Master of their poor services here, and would grasp at the crown the moment the cross presses on them. She had no desire to escape its father endurance, except as a compulsory intercourse with the wicked at times burdened her conscience with a dread of being counted a partaker in their guilt. When a mind keenly alive to the sanctity of God's name and word, has become the involuntary receptacle of blasphemous thoughts uttered by others, the merely mechanical act of memory, apart from all volition, bringing them suddenly forward, perhaps when engaged in the very act of worship, will smite the soul with a pang that none can conceive but those who have experienced it ; nay, the very effort to forget will imprint the abhorred idea more legibly on the brain. Exposed to all manner of evil communication, though Helen's good manners were not corrupted, nor her principles in the smallest degree shaken by it, still the defilement was felt ; and as the severity of temptation becomes more bitterly trying in proportion to the holiness of the mind that encounters it, to her it was exceedingly terrible. She had learned to practise a greater degree of abstraction than her naturally quick and observant habits would seem to have admitted : *it was by continuing in secret, ejaculatory prayer, by speaking to herself in psalms and hymns and spiritual*

songs, singing and making melody in her heart unto the Lord, that she contrived to shut out a great deal of what others drank in with contented if not with greedy ear ; but the relief was partial, the trial perpetual, increasing, and often wholly unavoidable. Yet, occasionally, when emboldened to speak to some of her more immediate associates in labor, she had marked the operations of the hands suspended, and the eye turned with inquiry, not unmixed with anxiety, to her face : and one such instance in a day would send her home resigned to endure for any length of time the trial of her own precious faith, if so she might be made instrumental in leading the poorest, the vilest, the most despised of her class to seek the same mercy. This is Christian principle in its highest, noblest exercise ; to stifle self, where self craves spiritual privileges and separation from the wicked ; in order to exhibit before others the light that may conduct them into ways of holiness and peace.

But what shall we say to this black feature in the factory system ? Its existence in the mills generally is too notorious to be denied ; no guard is set, no watch is kept, no thought is taken, where the morals of the laborers are concerned. It is to the manufacturing districts that evil men, as to a hot-house, repair to sow the seeds that they desire to see ripening into blasphemy and sedition. The Beast of Socialism fails not indeed to stalk over our fields, and to lay in wait for unwary stragglers among the rural population ; but it is in the manufacturing towns he nestles, and builds around him huge trophies with the bones of his slain. There the Chartist is taught secretly to whet his pike, and there the blight of Popery noiselessly spreads, sealing up in false, fatal peace, such souls as may not be prepared to enter into open league with hell. And against this host of destroyers with what armor does the instructed, the loyal, the professedly church-going master provide his poor, ignorant dependents ? The toil in which they engage for his advantage, lays them especially open to evil influence, while it de-



bars them from the acquirement of necessary information on matters where to be ignorant is to perish. True, there are not many of Helen Fleetwood's stamp to be wounded unto death by the hearing of what those men would not suffer their own daughters to hear for the wealth, perhaps, of all England's commercial hoards : but there are hundreds and thousands daily yielding to the torrent of iniquity that sweeps through the scene of their insipid toil, glad of any excitement to awaken their drowsy spirits, running the short, quick course of unbridled sin, and early dropping off into unnoticed graves. Yes, ye thoughtless holders of these treasures of immortal souls, your dead are quickly buried out of your sight, and speedily forgotten ; but do they not live, to greet you when the earth discloses her blood, and no more covers her slain ; and when, in reference not merely to the perished body, but to the writhing souls for ever cut off from life, for ever doomed to conscious, unutterable, interminable death, a voice you cannot close your ear against, asks in thunder the awful question, ' WHO SLEW ALL THESE ?'

## CHAPTER XXI.

### FURTHER EFFORTS.

A TEMPESTUOUS night of wind and rain had roughened the landscape where now the autumnal sun, still powerful in heat and brilliancy, threw a mantle of light as he ascended from the verge of ocean, whose agitated swell told of a recent tumult amongst those sparkling waves. The sounds that rose upon his ear seemed sounds of welcome to the dejected traveller, but found no echo in his bosom. He was weighed down by a sadness that would not yield to any cheering influence, and the recognition that every step compelled him to make, of some object identified with his dearest, fondest recollections, was but the repetition of a secret pang. Richard Green was changed, wholly changed, as regarded his relationship to the things about him. Once they had been numbered as so many future accessories to the happiness of which his young heart loved to dream; now they were tormenting remembrancers of that dream which he almost, at times, longed to forget, but to which he still clung, as a mother to the corpse of her only babe. He moved with a gait as heavy as formerly it was lightsome; and, when the gardener's lodge first caught his eye, by the Squire's gate, his head was instantly averted, as from some unwelcome spectre; but as quickly turned again, with the steadfast resolution to master his feelings, or rather to annihilate them. He passed on, left his packet of letters at the house of the gentleman whose envoy he had been, and then bent his steps towards the parsonage.

Mr. Barlow was an early riser, and according to Richard's calculation, would have finished his morning meal; but some business had detained him, and when the summons came to enter the study, he appeared seated at his comfortable breakfast, a well-worn Bible open beside him, and all the placid animation of his character beaming from a countenance that none could look on without loving him.

'Welcome, Richard, my good lad, your punctuality delights me; I can well guess it cost you something to bid farewell so soon; but, my dear boy, the path of duty is usually a path of self-denial. You look fatigued, too, and not by any means well. Come, sit down with me, take a bit of toast and a cup of warm cocoa; it will refresh you.'

Richard obeyed, so far as to seat himself on the opposite side of the table, but not a word escaped his compressed lips. The pastor saw that a severe struggle was going on within, and turning back to the preceding page of his book, remarked, 'I may as well give you a share in better things while offering a portion of the meat that perisheth; hear what a comfortable passage has presented itself to me this morning;' and he read the fourteenth of Hosea. Coming to the 3d verse, he repeated, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy," and looking up, observed, 'That promise is yours, and those who are now, as I well judge, present to your thought, even as though they sat beside us.'

Richard made an attempt to speak, but the hoarse sound was inarticulate; and Mr. Barlow, after one more anxious look into his face, finished the chapter.

'And now, Richard, drink your cocoa.'

The effort to swallow was successful, though so strong as to crimson the youth's face, and to swell every vein in his forehead. This was succeeded by another conquest, for he spoke, and in a voice though tremulous, yet so calm and clear, that it rather surprised Mr. Barlow, who was prepared for a burst of emotion.

‘I humbly ask your pardon, sir, for not speaking directly. Something came over me at first, but it’s gone, quite gone.’

‘And now tell me how you found and how you left them all.’

‘I found them, sir, in great poverty : my grandmother changed, as if by twenty years ; Jem dying and the rest—in the factory.’

He spoke the last three words with an expression such as Mr. Barlow had never before seen on his countenance : then after a short pause resumed,

‘I left them, sir, much as I found them, only Jem was a great deal nearer death ; and Helen given over.’

‘Given over !—Helen !—with what—fever ?’

‘Oh, no, sir ; no fever but that fever of heart and soul, that dries up, as it were, the poor body when it is worked and worked to death—the death of the factories.’

‘Richard, you astonish, you shock me. I would rather see you in all the agony of unrestrained sorrow than with that unnatural expression. Tears would be preferable to it.’

‘You’ll see no tears on my cheek, Mr. Barlow : I’ve cried them all out, and I’ll cry no more, but be a man ; as well I need, to bear all I’ve got laid upon me.’

A little soothing persuasion soon led the poor boy to a full disclosure of what had befallen the family while the unrestrained sympathy, and still more perhaps the undisguised indignation of his hearer, ministered a balm to his spirit that he could not resist. He went on to expatiate, and leaning his elbow on the little table, his cheek on his hand, forgetful of all the respectful distance that he had always observed, he told, with melancholy composure, the tale of his youthful hopes and anticipations, with their sudden blight ; ending with, ‘And so, as you’ll never be called on to marry us, Mr. Barlow, I can only hope it might be allowed her to come here alive, that you might bury her.’

The kind-hearted minister wept outright, and Richard,



looking at him with gratified feeling, said, 'I should like to cry too, sir; but somehow, I can't.'

'My poor boy, this is a heavy dispensation. Oh, what have they to answer for who laid this cruel snare in the harmless path of the widow and the fatherless? Kneel down with me, Richard; we have one Friend able and willing to succor, and to save to the uttermost.' He poured forth a most touching supplication, such as, a few days before, would have melted Richard; but though the 'Amen' was breathed from his inmost heart, he rose collected and tearless as ever. In answer to farther inquiries, he said.

'Mary and Willy may be got out of the vile mills at last; but you see, sir, Jem will hardly live through the week; granny can't hold out very long, she is so broke down; and Helen, they tell me, will fail all at once, and go away like a wreath of smoke. Ay,' he added, with sudden animation, 'and she'll go, like smoke, upwards; and when we lose sight of her she'll be mingled with the sky. That's a comforting thought, sir.'

Deeply affected, Mr. Barlow grasped his hand, and bidding him be sure to return to him in the evening took his hat, to search out his friend the doctor.

This gentleman's feelings were excited to so high a pitch that he ejaculated a hope he should not fall in with Stratton, till he had time to cool. Then said, 'Let Green write immediately a cheering account of his safe arrival, and enclose a note from me, which Helen must take to her doctor. At least, I'll find out whether returning here might not save her.'

The note was written, sent, delivered, and answered with equal candor and skill: the case was at least hopeless; and the removal impracticable: for, as the writer observed, the violence done to her feelings in separating her from those to whom she was so strongly bound, would *speedily* finish the work which no human means were likely to arrest in its quiet but rapid course.

A few days more brought a letter from Helen herself

to Mr. Barlow, requesting him to break as gently as might be, to Richard, the tidings it conveyed. She went on—‘We expected it too long to be unprepared, but it is a sore stroke too: and yet, honored sir, if you were here, looking at the sweet smile upon his pale cold face, you would say death is more beautiful than life. James talked of you, and prayed for you to the last; and said he should be in your crown of rejoicing at that day. He said if you knew the value of but one soul, as nothing but a dying bed could teach you, that you would think a whole life’s labor well spent even to gather in the soul of a poor little boy like him. Oh, sir, it must be terrible to feel the world sliding away, as it were, from under one’s feet, and the fiery pit standing open beneath, and nothing to catch hold of to keep one from falling into it. Our James saw it all, and he said things that I cannot tell you exactly, for he used finer words than I can repeat, and we wondered where he got them; but the meaning was, that all this only made him feel how close he was held within the arm of the Lord Jesus; so that though earth might pass from under him, and hell open before him, he could not feel fear, for he was in no danger. I humbly crave your prayers, honored sir, that when my time comes, which is not long, I may be as happy as James was, and as little afraid; but if not as happy, I hope I shall be as safe as he; for the same God is my God, and the same Saviour is my Saviour; and the same light will guide me through the dark valley of the shadow of death to the place where sorrow and sighing flee away.’

Mr. Barlow, having taken a copy of this letter, gave the original to Richard, rightly judging it contained a prospective no less than a present consolation for the poor youth, who, deeply humbled under the afflicting rod, went softly and sorrowfully about his daily work uncomplaining, *but evidently broken-hearted.* One day, some weeks after this event, he was surprised at his employment by the doctor, who, approaching with the look of a man intent on a benevolent object, said, ‘Green, I know you

will be glad to hear that business of an unexpected nature calls me within a few miles of M. where I mean to go and to devote a day or two entirely to your family. Such an opening must not be neglected ; and I want to consult you as to the plan to be pursued.'

Richard leaned on his spade, and fixed his sparkling eyes on the speaker, as if anxious for some further confirmation of what seemed too good to be true.

'It cannot be denied,' pursued the doctor, 'that your grandmother was unfairly dealt with through the artifices of a strange man, who found but too ready a co-operation here. We must take the laws as we find them, our duty is to submit, for the Lord's sake, to every ordinance of man ; but when we see a legal enactment stretched to the extent of oppressing the poor, it becomes the duty of every Christian to assist his afflicted fellow-subjects in bearing a burden that we cannot remove from their shoulders. I have tried my utmost at the vestry, but all I can obtain is a conditional promise that any member of the family who may be found wholly unable to labor, shall be admitted, to—to'—

'To the work-house, sir,' interrupted Richard, quietly.

'Yes : there is no alternative : it would not be impossible to find those among our gentry who might contribute to render the short time of your excellent grandmother's remaining years comfortable in an humble home ; but the long-sighted parochial policy of some persons is opposed to this : they argue that private charity is subject to personal caprice ; and that the temporary relief thus given at once to her necessities and to their funds, might end in throwing her at last upon them, while it held out present encouragement to others to make the same experiment of return, and so inundate them with claimants.'

Richard was silent : and his friend continued : 'I feel it is almost cruel to speak thus to you, but as you are a sensible young fellow, and one who habitually seeks guidance from above, it is right you should exactly understand the case'

‘It is better that I should do so, sir, and I thank you the more for it. If I understand rightly, the parish is willing to take my granny into the work-house, but will do nothing for the others.’

‘Just so : and if we persist in opposing them, it will be at the expense of a quarrel, when all has hitherto gone on well through the good-will subsisting among us. Mr Stratton, you know, holds office now : and he is very positive.’

‘The aggressor seldom forgives the injured person,’ remarked Richard.

‘But what say you to the proposal ?’

‘Why, sir, I say I can’t help wondering that a man so sharp in those matters should not know, or should not remember, or should not tell you all, that Richard Green’s daily earnings can feed two mouths ; and that while he has strength to do this’—he raised the spade a little, and struck it forcibly into the earth up to the very handle—‘his grandmother need not depend either on public or private charity for a shelter and a meal.’

‘My dear lad, there was one present at the meeting who answered for you that such would be your feeling, and more than one who asserted that you would act up to it : but to this it was objected that other ties might soon press on you, and the charge of a growing family leave you without the means, however strong your inclination might be, to provide for your aged parent.’

‘Then, doctor, the gentlemen did me wrong,’ said Richard, in whose bosom sorrow seemed struggling against sterner emotions.

‘You have too much of the old English character about you for these altered times, my honest friend.’

‘But, sir, we are free-born men ; and if I choose to take my grandmother to live with me, and work for her and myself, without being chargeable to any, is there any law to hinder me ?’

‘Let me ask you, in return, are you able to do so ?’  
Richard hung his head : he was still very young, though



large and strong for his age ; and in a place where laborers were more plentiful than work, except at some seasons of the year, he could not calculate on a sufficiency for housekeeping. The doctor observed him for a moment, and resumed. ‘ It is right I should tell you that the squire, by whom you are far better paid than you would be elsewhere, is on the prudent side in this business, and would not encourage your plan.’

This was a sad blow ; for Richard had just recollected the advantages to be expected by continuing in that gentleman’s service and favor. He shook his head despondingly, and looked at the doctor.

‘ Well, in the present stage of the business we will decide nothing. My visit to M. will enable me better to judge of the case, as regards the family ; and I promise you to make inquiry into everything, and to do what I can towards improving their condition and prospects.’

‘ Oh, sir, I have nothing but thanks’——

‘ And those you can keep till I have done something to deserve them. Meanwhile, get ready anything you wish to send, and pray for a blessing on my journey.’

A few days saw the kind-hearted doctor shivering within his comfortable surtout, among the uncongenial chills of a foggy atmosphere in M. He made his way to the place described by Richard, but the objects of his search were not there ; and with some difficulty he traced them to a yet more miserable locality, where the broken floor of their narrow apartment lay level with the street, and damp were oozing and shining in the sickly blaze of a few sticks over which the widow was stirring a little meal-broth. The pot very nearly fell from her hands, as she turned round at the well-remembered tones of a voice that had often cheered the bed of sickness in a far different abode ; and when that hand was kindly taken, and the voice that greeted her grew tremulous from emotion, at beholding her altered appearance, she sank into her chair, and wept and sobbed most piteously.

*A few drops of cordial mixture, considerably provided*

the very flavor of which had the sweetness of home upon it, assisted her to overcome this burst of a feeling too strong for her debilitated frame ; and a gladness not to be repressed brightened her spirit as she felt the reality of that most cheering sunshine of life—the presence of a true, an old, a sympathizing friend.

Richard's health and welfare were the first objects discussed : then followed the mention of James.

'Ah, sir,' said the widow, 'it ought to stifle every murmur of my unfaithful heart, to recollect what I saw in that precious child. His departure was as if the gate of heaven had been for a moment set open before me, that I might catch a glimpse of the glories within.'

'And has it been blessed to the others ?'

'One of them, sir, is as ripe for heaven as he was: the two children I can hardly judge of, for the long hours of work, and the poverty and sickness they are brought to, seem so to freeze them up, that at home they seldom speak, and I cannot always bear to rouse the poor things from the sleepy state that they are in.'

'You have removed from the lodging Richard left you in.'

'Yes, we found it too expensive ; and the landlord persisting in it that we had means of our own, threatened to raise the rent ; besides going up and down stairs is a trial to Helen, and I was glad to spare her a few steps. We are nearer the street, and nearer the mill too ; and oh, sir, I do hope I may say that every new step in the valley of humiliation brings me nearer to God.'

'You have his presence, and what are the world's riches to that ?'

'Or the world's poverty either, sir, which some count a blessing in itself. But there is as much pride among the poor as among the rich, and I needed to be taught that. I knew I wanted daily sanctifying ; but I did not know that I wanted daily humbling. He who knew it ordered it for me ; and truly I never so rejoiced in Him before falling from what was in my own mind a little

height among my equals, as now I do when I seem to have reached the bottom, and have grace to be there contented.'

'If such is your experience,' remarked the doctor, 'those who regard you must learn to look more contentedly upon this very great reverse in your circumstances; but I fear the children cannot view it in so happy a light.'

'Ah, sir, I spoke selfishly. Had I taken that rash step with a single thought of bettering our condition for my own sake, or with any other intention than to benefit them, I should indeed be most wretched now: but their interest was all I had at heart, and that spares me an aggravation of the self-reproach that I must always feel on their account.'

'How are they going on?'

'Helen is sinking fast; but nothing can persuade her to leave off mill-work. Since she became so ill, two or three of the girls who formerly tormented her, have softened very much, and even appear to seek the pious instruction that she is so anxious to give. This, and the determination to help while she can, make her proof against all persuasion to give over; and your visit, sir, just at this time, is a providential thing, for you can judge of her case, and can also influence her to act as you see best.'

'And what of my lively little friend Mary?'

'She has been too long a factory-child, sir, to deserve any more the name of lively.'

'I have been told the work has a very depressing effect on those engaged in it.'

'It has many bad effects, sir, and that is one. You are aware that I have, by the divine blessing, brought up my family in the ways of godliness. I could not impart to the dear children a new nature, nor spiritualize their minds; but I have been careful to accustom them to religious exercises and profitable discourse, waiting for the blessing that alone can give the increase, when we hav

sown and watered. Well, sir, our evenings at home were very pleasant; and I always found the children able to take an interest in scripture stories, asking questions, listening to my remarks, and making some themselves. But now, with Helen to help me, and with the blessed experience and dying testimony of dear James so fresh in their memories, they can seldom seem even decently attentive to what I feel bound to say; and neither the most beautiful Bible histories, nor Helen's delightful way of explaining things to them, will keep them listening. They are heavy and sullen, except when they talk to one another in a way that grieves me; telling silly tales, making ill-natured speeches about their companions, and repeating idle jests, often not fit to repeat; besides all that passes in whispers, and which no doubt is worse. It seems as if the weariness brought on by the dull, but fatiguing work, required something to remove it, more exciting to the bad feelings, than engaging to the mind. Oh, sir, I fear these mills are slaughter-houses to the poor little lambs of the flock!

'Take courage, my good Mrs. Green: remember that of Christ's own flock the weakest lamb shall never perish, neither shall any be able to pluck it out of his hand.

'True, sir, I do remember it: but it is a grievous thing to see what sorrows are being laid up in this life even for those who will not be actually lost, through the dreadful wickedness of such places. We are commanded to order our own households according to godliness—to bring up children in the way they should go—and it is a bitter thing to me to reflect that this handful of meal which I am making into a little mess for their supper, was bought at the price of their health, both of body and mind; at the price of their contentedness, at the price of their modesty, and, for aught I know, at the price of their souls.'

'I can fully comprehend your distress, my poor friend. I came here, sincerely anxious to render you service, and I will strive so to do. This evening when your young people return, you must have a little treat in readiness, by



way of establishing, or rather of reviving, my popularity among them ; and I will drop in, and take a full survey of the party so often interesting to me in better days.'

He shook her hand kindly, left a piece of money in it, and departed.

The doctor was not only a benevolent but a very energetic man. His decided temper, and fearless advocacy of what he knew to be right, had often turned the tide when it seemed to set in unfavorably for the interests of the poor in his extensive district. A Christian philanthropist will be a blessing in any department ; but perhaps in none so effectually as the medical line. The widow Green perfectly understood his character, and a ray of hope brightened her earthly prospect as she looked upon this bold honest servant of her Master, sent, as it appeared, to her succor. Railroad communication, though far advanced, had not yet thrown open a path for rapid travelling between the neighborhood of L. and the place that she then inhabited ; tedious journeys by stage-coaches must be encountered ; and this rendered a visit from him so utterly improbable, that she had never even imagined such an event. With a thankful heart she hastened to provide the unusual refreshment of a substantial meal for the young laborers, and invested her miserable hovel with as comfortable an aspect as it could be made to wear.

When the doctor paid his evening visit, it cost him an effort to suppress the feeling of mingled sorrow and indignation excited by the changed aspect of his favorite cottagers. Although still a young man, he had been settled in L. long enough to have attended the death-beds of their parents, and to watch their own growth from infancy. Mary's frank character, and her sprightly ways, had often amused him ; and on Helen he looked as the very beau-ideal of an English village maiden. He had secretly pleased himself with the probability of her some day repaying to Richard, in particular, the kindness bestowed on her helpless childhood. He was prepared to

witness great ravages on her blooming appearance, but the wan spectre that smiled upon him in all the unrestrained gladness of a heart-warm welcome—could that be Helen Fleetwood? A bright fire and a good-sized candle threw their mingled light upon her bent and emaciated but still graceful figure; and the total absence of color from her cheek, when the hectic of pleasure faded, the apparent enlargement of the sparkling eye, and swell of the pallid lip, all opened to him at one glance a page in her history that showed how nearly the brief tale was ended.

Near her sat Mary, her pretty wild curls confined in a stiff braid, set round the crown of her head with an attempt at smartness. Her long arms bony and bare, and her general air that of a person who is conscious of having greatly outgrown the expectations of the spectator. Grown, indeed, the poor child was, but more in the knowledge of evil than either in wisdom or in stature. She had established the reputation of one who was not to be put down by ordinary means; and this character she looked very legibly. The doctor thought her more painfully changed than Helen. Willy, who had seriously endeavored to fulfil his promises to Richard, and thereby exposed himself to ridicule and persecution, had effected a sort of compromise with his conscience, openly running in the way of his evil companions, but secretly protesting against it. The dying admonitions of his brother had sensibly affected him, and a very marked change for the better had followed on his departure; but Mary seemed bent on not allowing him to outrun her in the right path, and by exercising the influence that seniority and a dictatorial spirit gave her over him, she effectually kept his better feelings in check. This produced a heavy, downcast look, occasionally varied by one of sly inquiry, as to whether he was observed. The poor child was indeed suffering a conflict that no one suspected: for he fondly loved Richard, and deeply felt the solemnity of the pledge he had given him, and found his

conscience much awakened ; yet, lacking courage to open his mind to his grandmother or Helen, he quailed before Mary's power, aided by that of the evil examples around him ; and was in the condition of one who, desiring to reach a distant object, yet allows himself to be pulled back by what he had not boldness to resist. Such a case is frequently known in the experience of more matured years ; but it occurs among children oftener than is suspected, and often is the tender bud of early promise blighted through the neglect of those who leave it exposed to the rough blast, the nipping frost, or the parching ray.

The doctor took but a cursory view of poor little Willy, and withdrew his eye, satisfied that he was changed into a sullen, stupid child. All his interest became centered in Helen, whose natural rustic reserve seemed to have given place not to the acquired boldness of a town-life, but to the expansion of a spirit about to wing its way to the company of the redeemed in heaven, and to embrace in one wide grasp the whole church, as well militant as triumphant. She answered all inquiries as to her bodily health with a simple assurance that she endured little pain, but felt herself, she said, melting away like a snow-ball. When asked why she did not discontinue her labors, and devote the little time that might remain to preparation for the great change, she raised her eyes to the inquirer's face, and meekly asked, 'What preparation, sir ?'

'Why, it is a solemn thing to be expecting a summons into the immediate presence of God ; and should not the spirit be composed by meditation and prayer into a frame suited for such transition ?'

'I am not enough of a scholar, sir, to answer you rightly, and perhaps I am wrong in my notion, too ; but I do think that all our sufficiency being of Christ, who also himself makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, we can have no better preparation for the change that is coming, than to be diligen-

in such work as he gives us to do, even to the last moment.'

'But, Helen, is it not right to take a solemn review of our past lives, our past sins, our many short-comings, our unfaithfulness to God, our neglected opportunities, our abused privileges, and supplicate a total oblivion of them in the blood that cleanseth from all sins?'

'Doctor, I humbly hope that I do so; but at the same time I know that my thinking about my past sins will not help to wash away their guilt. *That* is done already through faith in the Lord Jesus; and when I go to him I shall be always praising him for doing it, and surely I shall then remember how great my sins have been, that I may the more magnify the great love of my Redeemer in dying to save me from them! But should not I redeem the time that remains, and do as the Lord bade the man do out of whom he cast the devils;—that is, tell my friends what great things he has done for me?'

The doctor was puzzled; he had brought forward some of the common-place discourse on a subject on which Helen was evidently clearer than himself. Instead of replying, he abruptly asked, 'Would you like to die in the factory, Helen, surrounded by the profane who mock your hope?'

'Indeed, sir, if such were God's will I should like it exceedingly.'

'Don't say so, my child!' cried the widow anxiously.

'We know very well, granny, that though one even came to them from the dead, they would not believe, if their hearts were not softened by the Holy Spirit; much less if one only departed this life before them; but such a thing might be blessed to some thoughtless soul, by his mercy; and I'm sure I don't know what could be more delightful in a dying hour than to think so.'

Here Willy, almost unconsciously, exclaimed, 'Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.'

'Doing what?' asked Mary in a sharp tone. The



child blushed, and hung its head, muttering, 'It was Jem said it.'

This little incident was not lost on the doctor; but he only repeated in a low voice, "'Who, then, is that faithful and wise servant?'" Well, Helen, I confess you have the best of the argument. He who with the talent given continues to trade and occupy till the Lord comes, is the object of that blessing. I will not seek to turn you from the path of usefulness; for you cannot spend your remnant of strength better than in promoting your Master's cause where, I fear, He is sorely dishonored. And now, Mary, how are you occupying?"

'I mind my work, sir; I don't feel able to preach like some others; but I set as good an example as I can.'

'I am rejoiced to hear it, my dear; for, however little effect a good example alone may produce, still if you did otherwise, you would incur a terrible condemnation. Just before leaving L. I saw my dear cousin, your own kind teacher at the Sunday school, who charged me with many anxious inquiries about you. "I never," she said, "took more pains with a child than with little Mary Green, and certainly none understood better the instructions given. She learned a great deal of scripture, and her answering proved that she thoroughly knew her duty to God and to her neighbor. I expect to hear on your return that Mary is a great blessing to the poor ignorant children about her. She is not afraid to speak her mind, and that is a great advantage where good treasure is lodged in the heart, and where there is such very great need of its being constantly brought forth. I hope my Mary is quite a little missionary, as she often said she should like to be, among those who are heathens in ignorance and sin." So spoke my excellent cousin; and added that she prayed for you continually, trusting that you too lived in the habits of prayer for yourself, without which the intercession of friends was vain. Am I then to rejoice her affectionate heart by confirming all these pious hopes?'

Mary's face underwent many changes during this searching speech. He had struck a chord long silent in her bosom, and one that she did not expect would sound again. All eyes were fixed on her: the doctor's with a penetrating scrutiny peculiar to his character; the widow's and Helen's with tender anxiety; and those of Katy and Willy with mingled sympathy and curiosity. She made an attempt to look pert, but wholly failed; and at last with a half-sob exclaimed,

'If I have lost all the good I once got, they must answer for it who brought me here, and placed me among devils.'

'Nay, Mary, the Lord says to the weakest of his children, however beset and however perplexed, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Can you tell me that you have daily, fervently, believingly, asked that grace, and not received it?'

Mary's agitation increased. She said, 'If you want to save my soul, take me back to my teacher!'

'Your teacher, my poor child, can do no more than direct you to the great Teacher above, to whom you have already learned the way. There is no need to take you back, to find access to him; for he dwells no less beneath this roof than in the Sunday school at home.'

He continued to speak in the same strain, Mary now weeping, now justifying her falling off; but evidently very much affected by his calm, firm language.

An interruption occurred by the sudden entrance of Charles Wright, who, without any preface, told the widow that his sister Sarah was very near death, and wanted to see her and Helen. Then added, with a flushed face, 'She has some fancy or other, and insists on your bringing a third person, not related to the family. Hudson would do, she says; but he lives so far off.'

The widow looked at her guest, who instantly said, 'As a medical man, no less than as a friend, I may be useful; shall I go?'

Charles cast a rapid glance over him, and replied, 'H

you please, sir; not that a doctor can now be of any use, but she is impatient, poor thing, and we can't deny the request of her dying breath.' He hurried out, evidently in great agitation; and the widow, throwing on herself and Helen the slight additional covering they possessed, led the way towards her daughter's house.

'I wish,' thought the doctor, as he closely followed them, 'I could change this luxurious surtout into a cloak to throw over the shoulders of that dying girl. Rather ought I to wish that the mantle of her active zealous spirit might descend on me, when she is taken hence, that I too may be found, like her, not only watching but working when my Lord cometh.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONCLUSION.

THE chamber of death into which our nocturnal visitors entered from the dark and dreary street, looked bright. Charles had run home, with the welcome intelligence that the witness whom Sarah had insisted on summoning was a perfect stranger, and a doctor likewise. Preparations were made accordingly, things righted; and the mother ready with a burst of suitable feeling to welcome her own aged parent, whose very existence she seemed of late to have forgotten. Thanks for her ready appearance, and regrets for calling her out at such an unsuitable hour, were mingled with lamentations about her dying child; but little heed was given, as the party drew near the bed where Sarah's mutilated form lay dreadfully convulsed, her cries every now and then ringing through the room. The doctor threw off his surtout, and inwardly grieving that Helen should be exposed to so agitating a scene, did all in his power to facilitate the poor girl's recovery, from what he saw was but a temporary struggle of departing life.

The convulsions ceased; she asked for drink, and in a voice of surprising clearness desired her brother to raise and support her. Then looking at the stranger, asked who he was.

'Our own kind doctor from L. my love,' answered the widow. 'One who has tended us all in sickness, and soothed the dying pillow of some, with the blessed consolations of the Gospel of Christ.'



‘God reward you for it,’ said the dying girl, turning her large eyes full upon him. ‘Ay, he is going to reward you this minute: listen to me, for I have more words to speak than breath to utter them with.’

‘Speak gently, then, my dear girl, and we will listen,’ replied the doctor: for he was not one of the class, too numerous, who would bid the full heart of the dying repress its utterance on the score of thereby retaining its pulsation a few seconds longer.

‘I am a factory girl, crippled, and wounded as you see to death, though not all at once, in the cruel mills; but that would be a small thing if the poor body alone had suffered. My soul was in ignorance and sin when I entered the mills, and became ten times more sinful while there.’

‘I’m sure,’ whimpered Mrs. Wright, ‘though we had no preaching ways among us,’ —

Sarah looked at Charles, who in a stern, stifled tone, said, ‘Mother, you know my promise: anybody trying to interrupt her shall be put out of the room.’

‘I left the mills,’ pursued Sarah, ‘the miserable object you see, and drew on a painful existence without the knowledge that there was hope for the poor sinner—nay, without knowing that I was sinful, or that God was holy, or that heaven had a mansion for the penitent wretch. I haven’t strength to tell you what *she* did for my soul,’ nodding her head towards Helen; ‘my dear grandmother, and the blessed boy that’s gone, gave me much instruction; but it was her conduct, while suffering dreadful, cruel things for my sake, that convinced me there was more than words could tell in the faith they all held. I was led to Christ by it; I was taught to cling to him through *every* trial, of *every* kind, and I have found Him the faithful and true Witness that He says He is. But I have a sister; one who is gone astray openly; and no wonder, for she *hated* the Gospel, and hated Helen for the Gospel’s sake: and I have this brother, now holding me in *his arms*—the kindest friend I have ever had, in attend

ing to me ; but he hated godliness and I am afraid he hates it still ; and he confederated with Phœbe to wrong Helen, without really wishing her any harm ; but only because, as the Psalm says, "the wicked seeth the righteous, and seeketh occasion to slay him," not because of any particular spite against the person, but because he can't bear the righteousness.'

It was wonderful how calmly and firmly she spoke this, looking all the while with great tenderness in her brother's face, who returned her look without a shade of displeasure.

'The Lord will visit you, Charles : but whether to save or to destroy I cannot tell. You wronged Helen—now right her !'

She uttered the last words in a voice, and with a gesture that bespoke exultation. Charles cleared his throat, and still looking at her, said, 'I've told you already, and I tell again, before these witnesses, I had no personal spite : Phœbe had plenty, and put me up to it ; and I did it as much joking as not. We arn't so squeamish in the mills as in the country villages ; and if Helen had taken more to our ways, she might have got on well enough. All I know is that she never did, nor ever said a single thing that anybody could call wrong. She was righteous over-much, and that nettled us. She often gave me good advice, and I let her, because I wanted to put another face on the talking between us. So now are you satisfied ?'

'Is Helen satisfied ?' asked Sarah.

'Yes—oh, yes ! quite enough has been said about it, and more than I wished : and now, dearest Sarah, compose yourself.'

'I am composed, Helen : my mother must speak too, and say if she has anything against you.'

'I have nothing to say,' muttered Mrs. Wright.

'Then, sir,' pursued Sarah, looking at the doctor, 'you will bear witness that everything ever said against Helen Fleetwood is confessed to be false by the persons who

spoke it. I know she does not want this, for she looks up higher than anything man can say or think of her : but in case an unkind report ever gets about again, you are her witness. Now I have done with this world.'

She closed her eyes ; and Charles, as he bent over her, was heard to whisper, ' Nobody ever shall say any one word against her : she is almost dying, poor thing !'

Sarah looked round ; ' Helen, come here ; are you dying ?'

' Not exactly that, dear : but I have a very short time to stay behind you ; and I trust we shall meet in glory.'

' Yes, in glory. I know it well, Helen, for the Lord Jesus is in glory, and he says to us, even to you and me, " where I am there shall ye be also." I never should have known that, only for you coming here ; I was more ignorant than a beast ; for they know the hand that feeds them, and I did not. Never leave off telling the sinful children and people in the mills what you told me. It may be forgot or not understood at the time ; but something will happen to bring it to mind, perhaps when you are long dead, and souls will be saved.'

Helen looked at the doctor, who nodded his head in acquiescence, and then asked Sarah if he should pray ; she gratefully assented, and after a most solemn and touching supplication, mingled with thanksgiving, in both of which she audibly joined, he told her to run with patience the very little that remained of her painful race, for that the prize was already within her grasp. A fond farewell, accompanied with fervent thanks, and expressions of great joy, was then bestowed by Sarah on the Widow and Helen ; and they left her in the act of once more inviting her family to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel.

' This was a striking scene,' remarked the doctor, ' and it teaches us a lesson of submission to many things that we consider hard. You were not led to this place by chance : the practices, unfair and cruel, that brought you from your native home were over-ruled for good. I re

joice in having been here, if only for poor Richard's sake.'

The doctor had resolved in his own mind to avail himself of this incident, in introducing to one of the Messrs. Z. a representation he proposed making on behalf of the young people employed in their mill. The next morning saw him at the house where the poor widow had made her first, unsuccessful attempt. The high respectability of his connexions, some of whom were known to Mr. Z., ensured him a polite reception; and after some general conversation, he introduced the subject by asking if Mr. Z. recollected the names of Green and Fleetwood, as laborers in his establishment. Mr. Z. recollected them well; but it suited his convenience better to say that the names of his work-people were entered in the books, kept by his agent; and into which he very rarely had occasion to look.

'They came to you,' persisted the doctor, 'from my district, at L., and brought a recommendation from my neighbor, Mr. Stratton, to you.'

'Oh, yes, I remember—a pauper family, sent to relieve the parish of a burden. You did quite right—I believe Ferris gave you the first hint, eh?' and he smiled knowingly.

'I took no part in the proceeding, sir, except as regarded a deep interest in the whole family, whom I have known from my first professional outset. In fact, my present visit to M. is principally on their account; and my calling on you entirely so.'

Mr. Z. could only reply by a courteous bow: a gentleman among his equals must be the gentleman still. The doctor entered upon a brief outline of the story that to him was so touching and his hearer listened with exemplary patience, even to the closing point of the last night's adventure. When the doctor paused, he spoke.

'Upon my word, a very interesting little history, and almost fit for a book. I am glad it has all ended so well; and no doubt you feel much gratified in being the bearer



of such a vindication to the girl's former neighborhood. We in large towns are perhaps somewhat lax in matters that are more strictly regarded in the country: 'tis a pity it should be so, but such is the universal experience. Have you seen the lions of M.—doctor? Can I be of service as an exhibitor?’

‘Thank you, Mr. Z., but my time is too limited for sight-seeing. I would rather engage your benevolent feelings on behalf of my poor friends than tax your politeness, or intrude on your leisure.’

‘My feelings, I assure you, are greatly interested already, by your narrative: but how does that affect the case? I have no power to act, were it even requisite; and from your statement it seems the only wrong inflicted on your protégé has been already redressed. Of course it is wholly impossible that I should enter into the personal bickerings of some hundreds of people, just because it happens to be my money that they receive on a Saturday night instead of any other mill-owner’s.’

‘Certainly, that would be scarcely practicable; but in a case like this, where an innocent young girl has been persecuted to death’s door, and where the wrong has been so publicly inflicted, so extensively connived at, a few words of admonition generally applied might produce an effect salutary to the whole establishment.’

Mr. Z. smiled: ‘My good sir, we are peculiarly favored on all sides by the gratuitous counsel of philanthropic friends, who, without possessing the slightest knowledge of the matter—hasten to our assistance, each with some infallible panacea for evils that exist only in his own imagination and that of his party. Listen to them, and you will conclude that we kidnap stray innocents, chaining them to our machinery, and compulsorily working them to death: whereas the fact is that we can scarcely find employment for a moiety of the applicants thronging our doors; and of all evils the one most dreaded by our supposed victims is that of dismissal. Allow me to ask would it suit the wishes of your poor friend

these Greens, to have their names erased from our books to-morrow ?”

‘No, for they are without resource.’

‘There are numerous establishments in the place, and perhaps in some a lack of practised hands : but they well know that such change would not better their condition. In fact, since you oblige me to speak plainly, they are a particularly troublesome family, of whom we should be heartily glad to rid ourselves ; but the knowledge of their having little chance of admission elsewhere, particularly since the public disproof of a charge unjustly brought against an excellent servant of mine, induces us out of mere charity to let them continue. Trust me, doctor, these low-bred people of the working class are abundantly cunning. They make out a plausible story, calculated to move the commiseration of the upper ranks, but keep back what would neutralize its effects. We are not to judge of the conversation kept up in the mill by the standard of drawing-room propriety ; nor to suppose that what would wound the delicacy of a young lady causes any trouble to a bobbin-filler.’

‘Granting all this, Mr. Z., it remains to prove that female modesty, where it does unquestionably exist, among those who are not gifted with wealth and accomplishments, is to be left wholly without protection ; female virtue without a guard where its possessor is industriously disposed to labor for a subsistence in the service of Christian masters : that while the body is worn out by exhausting employment, the mind must needs be exposed to every contaminating influence, and the heart broken by unkindness if the individual dares to remain what every Englishman must desire his countrywomen to be, chaste and honest.’

‘Ay, there spoke the prejudice that always lurks under these demonstrations. You consider us as pursuing a course of injustice, and view everything accordingly. *Because a coarse, rude, vulgar, impudent young person, belonging to the dregs of society, does not, on entering the*

mills, undergo as marvellous a transformation as the cotton itself, and come out a manufactured article prepared to figure in the high places of the land, we are denounced as though we had opened institutions to demoralize the virtuous, and vulgarize the refined of our species.'

The doctor felt provoked, not so much at his opponent's ingenuity in eluding the attack, as at his own want of boldness in taking up the only sure vantage ground: this he now resolved to do, and spoke out.

'We are talking beside, or rather below the real mark. Whatever may be the relative duties of man to his fellow, the central point where all meet, and whence again they all harmoniously diverge, is the mutual duty of each to his God. The master who desires to render to his servants that which is equal, because he knows that he also has a Master in heaven, will above all things seek to prevent the placing of a stumbling-block in the way of their souls, while using their bodily faculties for his own profit. Now, sir, you cannot deny the plain words of scripture, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God;" nor do you, I presume, in your own family, represent or regard a life of debauchery and crime as well-pleasing before God. Even were all laborers, persons of mature age, this plea would hold good: for, of course, you would not keep a footman to attend on your family, whom you knew to be a drunkard, a blasphemer, a thief, a profligate: but when we consider that the vast majority of those taken into your mills are children of tender years, easily influenced, and susceptible of lasting impressions, for evil or for good, oh, surely it becomes a solemn question between you and that "Master in heaven," how you use the great authority, the weighty responsibility inseparable from your position with regard to these, your fellow immortals.'

'I protest, doctor, you are making out a connection between the office of a "cotton lord," as you call us, and that of a spiritual lord or bishop, that I never dreamed of. Why, according to your views, we should each

regard the mill as a diocese, and preach in it !' He laughed, then proceeded with suppressed bitterness. 'I am aware that your friend Lord Ashley labors hard to put this simple matter in the perplexing light of a theological question, and thereby misleads many.'

'Lord Ashley,' replied the doctor, 'is no otherwise my friend than he has entitled himself to the affectionate regard of every one who loves his God and his fellow-creatures. Neither am I aware that he has done what you say : quite contrary. Proceeding on Christian principles, he has steadily kept in view the declared object of his compassionate efforts—an amelioration of bodily suffering to the factory children. I, on the other hand, have strenuously avoided that topic, although I could say much, very much, upon it, from actual observation during the last few hours in this town. I wished to direct your attention to another point ; and in so doing to give no offence either to your feelings or to my own conscience.'

'Believe me, doctor, I highly appreciate your candor : our position is by no means an enviable one.'

'I admit it ; but I think the remedy lies within your reach.'

'So they tell us ; but we take leave to think differently, and to fight our own battle with some hope of a final triumph. Pho ! why every man who has anything to do with the working classes knows their proverbial discontent : the more numerous, important and well-paid they are, the readier to strike for higher wages, and to pull our houses down about our ears.' He spoke with an air that proved how wholly at variance with his real feeling was the moderation he had expressed, and then, with cool politeness, asked if his guest would honor him with his company at dinner in the evening. The doctor thanked him, but said his time was fully occupied ; and while taking his hat, inquired if any extra indulgence was ever allowed to such as had lost their health in the factories.

'Of course not. It would open a door to endless im-



position, extortion, and wrong, if adopted as a rule ; and if occasionally done, would furnish matter of discontent. While the people choose to work, they have their wages regularly paid ; and when they choose to leave off, there is an end of our acquaintance.'

' Well, Mr. Z., I have no wish to quarrel with any of your plans, nor to arraign the justice of your proceedings. To his own Master must each of us stand or fall. I will entertain a hope that on reflection, what I have related to you may lead to some practical results. Here is the case of a family, an aged widow and orphan children, deluded into migration from a safe and peaceful, though humble home, by printed representations most grossly and palpably false in the sight of those who published them. They settle to work, anxious to procure an honest maintenance, and find themselves surrounded by every description of evil, without an effort, or the semblance of an effort, on the part of their employers, to enforce anything but a rigorous exaction of bodily labor from them, and a strict performance of the contract, as regards their master's interests. They are taxed to the utmost of their strength, and so far beyond it as to sap the stream of life, dooming the young frame to a premature grave. Severity, in every possible shape, is practised ; and justice, by every available device, frustrated. The men to whom you delegate all power in the mills may abuse it to any extent : you will not leave your sphere of refined gratification to look into such details : and should a complaint reach your ear it is quickly met by the crafty representations of those who know too well how to place your worldly interests in such prominence as to eclipse the weightier concerns of eternity. Bodies are daily perishing : souls continually swelling the multitude whose hope is cut off for ever : and in all this you have a responsible part to bear, whether you believe it or no : a part assigned you of God, who will assuredly require an account of such stewardship. I pray that He may convince you of this, and while blotting out the past

in the blood of the cross, so assist you in your future course, that the great account may be rendered at last with joy, and not with grief.'

Helen did not die in the mill: but her last seizure took place there, and so alarmed her companions as to give a great effect to the few words she was enabled to speak to them before being carried home. Short, but severe, were her sufferings; and in a few days a rough shell enclosed her wasted remains, which were laid beside those of Sarah Wright. This stroke fell too heavily on the poor widow to be parried; and after many fruitless struggles she was compelled to submit; accepting a pass back to her parish, and taking up her abode in the workhouse of L. To her, the event was one of little moment, save as it inflicted a pang, of which she well knew the severity, on her Richard. He had done his utmost to avert it, but in vain: and to soften the stroke Mr. Barlow prevailed on the squire to take Willy into his service, as a helper in that department where Richard was giving such perfect satisfaction. Mary was, by the doctor's kind interest, apprenticed out to an humble business; where pride had little to feed on, and passion dared not flame out. The most distressing part of the business was what related to poor little Katy. She had no home, no friends but among her own country-people: and with anguish of heart the widow Green delivered her up to the care of one whom she knew to be a bigoted Romanist; and who, by the priest's aid, made out a sort of claim that could not be opposed by those who had no means to offer any other resource. Hudson promised to keep an eye on her, and this was the only earthly solace of the friend who had fondly hoped to see her grow up a second Helen under her fostering care.

*It was on a bright day in spring, after laboring together in their master's park, that Richard and Willy seated*

themselves to eat their frugal meal beneath an ash, just putting forth its tender leaves to the fostering ray.

'Oh,' said the little boy, 'what a thankful heart I ought to have; being in the dear country again, to see the flowers grow, and to hear the birds sing, and to feel the fine fresh breeze blowing upon me! I think, Richard, I should be as happy as ever I was, if I could only see you as gay and sprightly as you used to be.'

'I can't, Willy: for half of my sprightliness was owing to the pleasant thoughts I used to be having about days to come, when you would all be about me, and I working for you all, and helping you to be independent.'

'But, Richard, is it not better we should be working for ourselves, as I and Mary do, instead of depending on you? Besides, what I earn would not keep me by half, only for what you do for me, my own kind brother.'

'True, darling, it is better you should be laboring honestly for yourselves: and I ought to be very thankful that dear Granny is decently comfortable in—, where she is: but, Willy, we are a broken family, and the best and brightest of us are no longer on earth. You must not be surprised if I never get up my spirits as they used to be: for my thoughts are far away, in a better place than this.'

'Tis true, Richard, you are changed greatly: I sometimes fret to see you always so grave, but I can't wonder at it. I wish you would consider what a great mercy it is you have got us out of the factories: it would be far better to beg our bread along these roads than to earn it there.'

'I believe so, indeed.'

'Yes: seeing the spring come on makes us feel it more than ever. I am sure I am ready to cry when I think of the poor children in those frightful mills, who don't know what sunshine is like, except that it makes the work-rooms hotter, and shows them the dirty flies flying about, and makes them think how pleasant it would be to get a run, and a play, in the fields, or eve

in the street. You can't think how dreadful it is: it makes us feel as if we hated everybody and everything, and could do wickedly for the mere pleasure of being wicked. If any good thought comes into the mind, it is sure to be driven out by hearing something very bad; and as neither God nor man seems to care about us, we have little care of offending either.'

'Don't say *we*, Willy.'

'No, I was speaking as if I still belonged to them, the remembrance is so strong on my mind: and I am sure it was the wickedness of the place, more than the work, that killed Helen.'

'But the work was enough to do it.'

'Yes, if she had been a younger girl. I don't know if a grown person can stand it better, indeed; but I am sure the little ones must be made of iron if they do. Only think what it is to feel you *must* go to sleep, out of downright fatigue, and yet you dare not: to see the children about you, moving their fingers with their eyes shut, dreaming they are at work, and the overlooker giving the poor things a cut to wake them; so that the fright sets their hearts going like mad, and they feel weaker and sillier than before. I can't bear to think,' added the boy, while tears stole down his cheeks, 'I can't bear to think that now, when I am basking in this beautiful sunshine, leaning on your kind knee, and having you watch that I don't even overtire myself at any pleasant work, my poor little companions are going on, on, on, in their weary slavery, the whirling wheels always whirring, and not a pleasant sight nor a cheerful sound to make a variety. Their bare feet hot on the boards, and to be pattering through the cold mud at night to their close, dirty homes, where they won't be let sleep long enough to get up refreshed for to-morrow's toil.'

'It does cheer me, Willy, to think you are out of it all.'

'It ought: and oh, Richard, we should pray for those



men who are trying to make the factory children less miserable ; and whenever you speak to the great folks, put in a word : for I can't help thinking God must be angry with them while they take so much care about their own little ones, and have no thought, no feeling for the perishing children of the poor "



## "THE LITTLE ENGLISH FACTORY GIRL

" 'T was on a winter morning,  
The weather was wet and wild,  
Three hours before the dawning,  
The father roused his child :  
Her daily morsel bringing,  
The darksome room he paced,  
And cried, the bell is ringing,  
My hapless darling, haste !

" ' Father, I 'm up, but weary :  
I scarce can reach the door ;  
And long the way and dreary—  
Oh, carry me once more !  
To help us we've no mother,  
And you have no employ ;  
They killed my little brother—  
Like him I'll work and die !'

" Her wasted form seemed nothing  
The load was at his heart,  
The sufferer he kept soothing,  
Till at the mill they part.  
The overlooker met her,  
As to her frame she crept,  
And with his thong he beat her,  
And cursed her as she wept.

" Alas ! what hours of horror  
Made up her latest day,  
In toil, and pain, and sorrow,  
They slowly passed away !  
It seemed, as she grew weaker,  
The threads they oftener broke,  
The rapid wheels ran quicker,  
And heavier fell the stroke.

5 22 3 2 8

"The sun had long descended,  
But night brought no repose,  
Her day began and ended  
As cruel tyrants chose.  
At length her little neighbor  
Her half-penny she paid,  
To take her last hour's labor,  
While by her frame she laid,

"At last, the engine ceasing,  
The captives homeward rushed;  
She thought her strength increasing—  
'T was hope her spirits flushed;  
She left, but oft she tarried;  
She fell, and rose no more,  
Till by her comrades carried,  
She reached her father's door.

"At night, with tortured feeling,  
He watched his speechless child,  
While, close beside her kneeling,  
She knew him not, nor smiled!  
Again the factory's ringing,  
Her last perception tried;  
When from her straw-bed springing,  
'T is time!' she said—and died."

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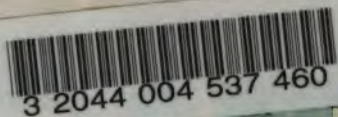
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